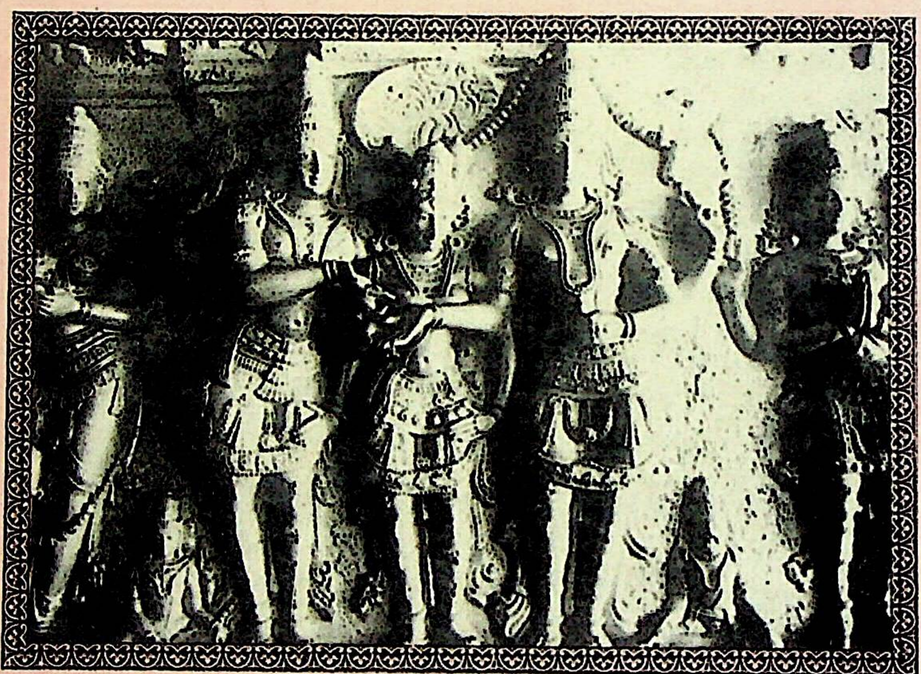
Sacred Marriage of a Hindu Goddess



WILLIAM P. HARMAN

For at least the past two hundred years, Hindus in so[illegible] India have celebrated the marri[illegible] goddess Mīnākshī to the Hindu [illegible] This annual ten-day celebration [illegible] the largest and most famous Hindu festivals, attracting hundreds of thousands of the faithful each year. William Harman's work examines this important ritual event from a variety of perspectives, including the history of religions, Sanskrit and Tamil textual traditions, and Hindu culture. Moving beyond traditional understandings of the category of "sacred marriage" derived from studies of the ancient Near East, Harman reveals that sacred marriage in India functions as a devotional metaphor for Hindu devotees, a way of understanding how deities act toward one another and toward who worship them. Combining systematic textual study with descriptive fieldwork, Harman offers us an original and perceptive exploration of the relationship between the human and the divine in Hindu life.

ISBN: 81-208-0810-x

The Sacred Marriage
of a
Hindu Goddess

THE SACRED MARRIAGE OF A HINDU GODDESS

WILLIAM P. HARMAN

MOTILAL BANARSIDASS PUBLISHERS
PRIVATE LIMITED • DELHI

First Published: 1989, Indiana University Press
Reprint: Delhi, 1992

ISBN: 81-208-0810-x

FOR SALE IN INDIA ONLY

Also available at:
MOTILAL BANARSIDASS
41 U.A., Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007
120 Royapettah High Road, Mylapore, Madras 600 004
16 St. Mark's Road, Bangalore 560 001
Ashok Rajpath, Patna 800 004
Chowk, Varanasi 221 001

PRINTED IN INDIA
BY JAINENDRA PRAKASH JAIN AT SHRI JAINENDRA PRESS, A-45 NARAINA INDUSTRIAL AREA, PHASE I, NEW DELHI 110 028 AND PUBLISHED BY NARENDRA PRAKASH JAIN FOR MOTILAL BANARSIDASS PUBLISHERS PVT. LTD., BUNGALOW ROAD, JAWAHAR NAGAR, DELHI 110 007

To Gay, B.J., and Elizabeth

CONTENTS

Illustrations follow Chapter IV

PREFACE

This book grew out of a need to understand an experience: that of witnessing and participating in a Hindu religious festival. Between the years 1968 and 1970 I lived in the city of Madurai in southern India. During the Tamil month of Citrā (April-May) of 1969 and 1970 I was present for the city's famous annual festival celebrations which I have selectively described in chapter four. As I sought to understand the remarkable tenor, enthusiasm, and obvious faith that brought well over 500,000 pilgrims to the city whose population doubled during the ten-day celebrations, I found that the festivities had many layers. The event was singular only in the sense that it was very involving. No one living in the city could possibly ignore it. But no one was able to explain it all as a coherent whole. It seemed the more I learned the less I understood. Subsequently, I was fortunate enough to meet and talk with Dennis Hudson who, in the years since 1968, has written several articles about that festival. His articles first convinced me that a pattern might be discernible (see Hudson 1971, 1972, and 1977). Much of his work became the basis for a documentary film about the Madurai festival, a film entitled, "Wedding of the Goddess," which—along with an accompanying study guide—interested readers may wish to consult. First distributed in 1976 by the South Asia Area Center of the University of Wisconsin in Madison and filmed by Michael Camerini and Myra Binford under the direction of Joseph Elder, the film is in two parts. Part I (thirty-six minutes) provides historical background, and part II (forty minutes) presents the events of the festival.

In the pages that follow I have tried to sort out the meanings of the festival in terms of the traditions that form its backdrop: textual, historical, cultural, and, above all, religious. Of course, much will remain unexplained, even unnoted. But if I can communicate to readers some sense of the depth, wisdom, and intensity of religious devotion which I encountered in Madurai, I shall consider my efforts well worth the time and energy invested.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Much of the pleasure in writing this book has come from the opportunity it provided to meet and work with some remarkable people, many of whom I now count as friends and colleagues. Initially, large parts of this manuscript appeared as my Ph.D. dissertation under the direction of Wendy O'Flaherty, whose ability to combine critical scholarship with sensitive support is nothing short of remarkable. Her influence appears throughout the work. Under the careful tutelage of James Lindholm I first read *The Story of Śiva's Sacred Games*. Others who generously provided the benefits of their comments on earlier manuscript drafts include Paul Courtright, David Shulman, Dennis Hudson, Paul Younger, Patrick Olivelle, Judith Berling, Kees Bolle, and George Hart. K. Paramasivam and V. S. Rajam commented on many of my translations with patience and acumen. To Ci. Cu. Maṇi, Balamani Manickam, and V. Arumugam I owe a special debt of thanks. They reviewed every verse of my translation of "The Chapter of the Sacred Marriage." Their generosity and insight were an inspiration. While every one of these people has enriched the manuscript, none except me is responsible for the errors that remain.

A National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship for College Teachers provided a year for revising and enlarging this final version. Colleagues at DePauw University have been supportive and generous in more ways than I can here enumerate. They approved my request for a leave from teaching duties so that I could complete this writing, offered assistance for manuscript preparation and, through Robert Bottoms, made available a grant from the Hewlett-Mellon Presidential Discretionary Fund to defray the added costs of typesetting Tamil and Sanskrit diacriticals. Dian Phillips provided much-needed professional expertise in the process of creating maps and diagrams. To James Gammon I am especially grateful for offering a secluded spot in which to work. Without such assistance, the book would have taken years longer. Indeed, it may not have appeared at all.

I gratefully acknowledge permission granted by the following journals to reprint portions of my articles appearing in them: *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Mankind Quarterly*, *The International Journal of Sociology of the Family*, and *The Journal of the Institute of Asian Studies*. Julian Smith kindly granted permission to reproduce portions of his 1976 drawing of the central area of the old city of Madurai.

One of the finest gifts that has come to me during this writing is the perspective my wife, Gay Reese, has provided. She has taught me to see myself critically, to trust my instincts, and to order priorities in light of the fact that it is, in the end, people who are religious: not texts, institutions, traditions, or even histories.

A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

In Tamil-speaking southern India, interplay between the classical languages of Tamil and Sanskrit has a long history. Though I am much more familiar with Tamil, I have used Sanskrit terms and transliterations as often as seemed practicable because Sanskrit will be more familiar to Indologists. An appendix at the end of the book gives the Tamil transliterations of most of these Sanskrit terms and names.

I have used the system of the *Tamil Lexicon* of Madras University in most Tamil transliterations. When common usage in India has established an alternate, widely accepted transliteration, I have usually used it. Here are a few examples with the initial word presented in *Tamil Lexicon* transliteration and the second presented as it is commonly transliterated by Indians themselves: Maturai becomes Madurai; Vaikai becomes Vaigai; Tirunelvēli becomes Tinnevelly; Caiva Cittānta becomes Saiva Siddhanta.

SELECTED ABBREVIATIONS

Brahm.	Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa
DED	Dravidian Etymological Dictionary
Dēvi Bhāg.	Sri Mad Mad Dēvi Bhāgavatam
DOL	Dictionary of Oriental Literatures
EB	Encyclopedia Britannica (15th ed.)
ERE	Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics
Kalai.	Kalaikkaḷañciyam
Mahāb.	Mahābhārata
TL	Tamil Lexicon
TVP	Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam

The Sacred Marriage of a Hindu Goddess

I.

The Sacred Marriage Metaphor in Religious Studies and in Hinduism

"Sacred Marriage" as a Category

Scholars have long been aware that the faithful in many religious traditions talk about deities who marry. Usually these references appear in stories where two deities wed, in stories where a deity and a human being unite in symbolic or spiritual marriage, or in ritual performances when human beings, playing the roles of deities, reenact a "sacred marriage." In some cases the marriages are regarded as permanent; in some they are quite temporary. Given the wide range of contexts in which the term has been used, I will define *sacred marriage* as a perceived marriage—whether private or public, permanent or temporary, ritually enacted or mythically narrated—in which at least one of the partners is understood to be or to represent a deity (Brandon 1970, 430; J. Z. Smith 1978).

In Western and monotheistic traditions, references to marriages of deities are less common than they are in polytheistic traditions. Still, they exist. In the Christian tradition, for example, we find discussions of the Church as Christ's bride,[1] of Roman Catholic nuns as "brides of Christ,"[2] of the Mormon "Mother in Heaven," who is the wife of God (Albanese; Wilcox; and Heeren, Lindsey, and Mason) as well as the nuptial imagery of John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. For Sts. John and Teresa, the ultimate mystical state was expressed in terms.of physical union with God. In this context, St. John frequently referred to excerpts from the sensual Song of Songs in Hebrew scriptures. Indeed, as one of the most unusual pieces of literature in the Hebrew Bible by virtue of its explicit erotic imagery, The Song of Songs has been interpreted by both Jewish and Christian traditions as an allegory of the love of God (the bridegroom) for his people (the bride). The piece has been taken by exegetes to describe the longing of the nation of Israel (the bride) for union with God, the intense desire of the soul for union with Christ, or the love of the Christian Church for Christ the bridegroom (Meek 1956; Pope, 89–210).

What is probably the logical inversion of the notion that humans, and especially women, marry God can be found in late medieval records of accused witches who were believed to couple lasciviously with the devil. Lurid descriptions of these sexually charged "visitations" by the devil were often extracted

under torture, and were used to convict and sentence to death the accused women (Morris, 299ff.).

In recent ecclesiastical history, theological developments among such Christian groups as Shakers, Christian Scientists, and Swedenborgians have emphasized the role of the feminine as an aspect of the divine. And in the Jewish tradition, later developments in the *Kabbalah* gave significant attention to the feminine principle, referred to as *Shekkinah* or "Wisdom." God was considered androgynous, and the union between divine male and female was regarded as the basis for the creation of the world (Scholem; Poncé).

In polytheistic traditions, however, we often find a much more elaborate use of marital terms and marital imagery in discussions about what deities do. The Greek term *hieros gamos*, which means "sacred marriage" (later anglicized as *hierogamy*) was probably used earliest in Western scholarship to describe the union of Zeus and Hera in Greek mythology. This mythic union between deities was, we are told, ritually celebrated annually at Gortyna in Crete (Lenormant 1882). One way to sort out the various relationships among Greek deities and between Greek deities and humans is to arrange the whole lot in terms of elaborate genealogies, specifying who married whom and what sons or daughters were born to those marriages (Boswell). A similar approach, but focusing on the Hindu pantheon, has been adopted by Ziegenbalg. Other scholars have called attention to the existence of marriages with or between deities in a wide variety of religious traditions in Africa, Australia, Peru, Melanesia, Mesopotamia, Japan, China, and northern Europe (e.g., Eliade 1963, 257ff.; Frazer 1922, vol. 2, chap. 10).

Sir James Frazer's early use of the term *sacred marriage* included references to both mythic accounts and ritual reenactments. *Sacred marriage* for him included those rituals in which humans embodied "spirits of vegetation" in the earth. Playing their roles as male and female "spirits," these humans engaged in sexual intercourse to effect, by virtue of sympathetic magic, a generalized fertility. Abundant crops and numerous animal and human births were to be the direct result of these acts. Frazer occasionally used the term *theogamy*, but he also used *sacred marriage* in the same context. In general, while *theogamy* referred to ritual, *sacred marriage* referred to both myth and ritual. His use of the two terms did not indicate an awareness on his part of significant distinctions between them.

The term *sacred marriage* as a reference to activities of deities gained greater currency in the history of religions when it came under scrutiny as an important category in the religious traditions of the ancient Near East. In particular, it was isolated by S. H. Hooke as one of the five basic elements in a pervasive "ritual pattern" which scholars believed they had found in Egyptian, Sumerian, Mesopotamian, Canaanite, and Israelite religions (Hooke 1933a, 8; Blackman, 15–39; Gadd 1933, 40–62; Hooke 1933b, 68–86; Robinson, 181–91). The postulation of this widespread pattern by the "myth-ritual" school inspired extraordinary scholarly efforts on the part of such scholars as C. J. Bleeker, Adam Falkenstein (1953), Henri Frankfort, Theodore Gaster (1961), Thorkild Jacob-

sen (1962; 1976), E. O. James (1964), Samuel Kramer (1963; 1969), H. Ringgren, and many others.

This scholarly interest in the ancient Near East was also encouraged by new archaeological finds and corresponding advances in the ability to decipher recently discovered texts (Kramer 1944). Discussions about the nature of sacral kingship, the relationships between myth and ritual, the role of annual festivals and sacred time, urbanization, and sacred marriage all profited from this early twentieth-century concentration of scholarly efforts on the Near East (Hooke 1958; Gadd 1948; Frankfort; Brandon 1958; Bleeker; Groenwegen-Frankfort; Kraeling and Adams).

In the earlier works of these scholars certain axioms developed which—though occasionally challenged—remained part and parcel of the discussions of the "ritual pattern" as it related to sacred marriage. One of the most important was the assumption that the mythic accounts and the ritual enactments of sacred marriage were concerned primarily with fertility (Brandon 1970, 430; J. Z. Smith 1978; Garce and Mortier, I:348; Eliade 1953, 57–95). Strangely, in support of the notion that sacred marriage is always associated with fertility, scholars have cited only two specific textual examples from the Near East (Kramer 1963, 502 and 507). Ira Wheatley points out that these two Sumerian examples are remarkably few to justify the generalization that all instances of sacred marriage are intended to effect fertility. He says, however, with a hint of the resignation of someone who doesn't really want to swim against the prevailing currents, "One may properly suppose that it [*hieros gamos*] continued to be associated with the assurance of fertility, but he does so in the absence of direct documentation" (90).

Careful scrutiny of sacred marriage in India indicates that this supposition does not hold. There, in the context of sacred marriage, agricultural metaphors which involve fertility are, at best, secondary.[3] Indeed, I want to propose that in the history of religions the notion of fertility has been overworked and overrated as an explanation for what occurs in sacred marriages.

What alternatives do we have? Eventually, I hope to show that sacred marriage has much to do with organizing devotees' perceptions of the relationships that exist between deities and of the relationships devotees might have with their deities. To be specific, when Hindus speak of marriage between the two major deities of the temple city of Madurai, and when they participate in its annual reenactment, they are not, by and large, participating in an event intended to insure a generalized fertility. In India, sacred marriage does not function primarily as an agricultural metaphor in which the earth, conceived as female, is rendered fruitful by a symbolic marriage with cosmic, divine, and male elements. The event tends to be more personal and less purposive than that: it is, rather, a devotional metaphor, often expressing the dynamics of a devotee's relationship with a particular deity or a group of deities.

One possible reason why fertility symbolism plays a much less important role in marriage celebrations in southern India is the fact that there are other rituals,

exclusively celebrated for women, intended to suggest and to enhance fertility. In both southern India and in Śri Lanka, it is common to celebrate puberty rituals for women shortly after their first menstruation. These rituals, not marriage, constitute "the primary occasion demarcating a girl's potential fertility" (Wadley, 165).

One of the advantages with which this study operates is the overwhelming abundance of primary material. We can speak with devotees, read complete versions of relevant texts, watch, photograph, and inquire about the rituals, which, if we wish, we may return to watch the following year. Scholars who dealt with the ancient Near East had nothing like this: they had only fragmentary texts, no participants at all and, of course, no rituals.

Basic to my study of sacred marriage in India is the concept of metaphor in religious studies. Though I will return to this concept in the final chapter, it is appropriate now to explain what I mean by it and what it has to do with sacred marriage, divine kingship, and a study of the relationships between myths and their associated rituals.

Metaphors and Their Uses

Metaphors are not just decorative images; they make sense and they have meaning. A metaphor proposes certain analogies between the normal context of a word and a new or different context. Thus, a metaphor is a transaction between contexts, encouraging us to discover how the two contexts can illuminate each other in new and sometimes unexpected ways.[4] But if metaphors do have meaning, they are not necessarily true in the literal sense. Consider this example: a married couple recently published their first coauthored book, and announced to their friends that the book was their first child. The announcement made figurative, though not literal, sense. The metaphor they used juxtaposes two contexts: that of parenthood on the one hand and of academic publishing on the other.

One of the characteristics of metaphor is its open-endedness. It can be sustained: the contexts which it juxtaposes can be further explored, and new insights or understandings may emerge. In this sense, the metaphor creates new perceptions of reality.[5] In the example above, we are encouraged to see both authorship and parenthood in new ways. Parenthood can be regarded as a careful, deliberative endeavor in which attention to detail and the willingness to be self-critical are extremely important. Authorship can be regarded as an enterprise involving cooperation, passion, love, and sensitivity in which the product eventually takes on an independent life of its own, quite apart from the lives of its authors. In this way, metaphors may be sustained: if not *ad infinitum,* at least *ad nauseam*. The suggestion that doing footnotes is the diaper changing of authorship might be just such a case.

Another characteristic of metaphor is that it both reflects and generates a

sense of community among those who share it (Cohen, 6). The more obvious it is to juxtapose two specific contexts, the larger the community of understanding which the metaphor reflects. Again, an example will be appropriate. This one involves the juxtaposition of two linguistic communities. Native English speakers will normally understand me when I complain, "My foot has gone to sleep." But not all people whose English is excellent will understand me. This is because the statement is what linguists call an idiom. The native Tamil speaker whose English is excellent may prefer to express the same physical state by saying, "My foot has turned into wood," for this physical state is described in his native language precisely that way: *Kāl marattu pōyiṟṟu*. However, some native Tamil speakers will not misunderstand me when they hear me say what I perceive to have happened. They will know what I mean. And if they do, with respect to this utterance, they are more a part of the English-speaking community than their compatriots who mistake my meaning. This metaphor, then, delineates certain parameters of a community, even though most people in it have no idea that they are a part of a community that understands what it means to speak metaphorically about sleeping feet.

Obviously, some rather significant communities are delineated by metaphors. David Tracy (89–104) believes that each major religious tradition is defined by a constellation of sustained metaphors. He calls these sustained metaphors "root metaphors" (see also MacCormac, 99–101). Tracy sets for himself, as a Christian theologian, one central task: that of analyzing the root metaphors that appear in the parables of Jesus (93, 99). Ian Barbour (104–76) calls a constellation of sustained metaphors a model in one case and a paradigm in another. The task of theology for him is less specific and less bound to text or narrative: "Theology is the systematic and self-critical reflection of a paradigm community concerning its beliefs" (176). It is not my intention to define the task of theologians for them. What I hope to do, however, is to demonstrate how a sustained metaphor can delineate and, in turn, sustain a religious community. The "root metaphor" with which I am primarily concerned is that which historians of religions term *sacred marriage,* or *hieros gamos*.

Sacred Marriage as Metaphor

In asserting that *sacred marriage* is a metaphor, I am saying that the term itself proposes a juxtaposition between two contexts. The *sacred* context is that of deities, and of the actions attributed to them. *Marriage,* on the other hand, is an activity commonly attributed to human beings. The metaphor invites us to think of what deities do in terms of what humans do. Whether we regard sacred marriage as a projection onto the divine realm of what humans do, or whether we regard it as the divine paradigm for what humans ought to do, the term *sacred marriage* evokes this juxtaposition of two contexts. But the metaphor does more than evoke two separate contexts. It implies that with respect to

marriage, humans and deities have some things in common.[6] That there are similarities between the divine and human realms is, in itself, a significant statement: the categories *human* and *divine* may be conceptually separate, but they are not radically separate. In fact, there are multiple points of contact between them—and one of those points of contact is marriage.

In the Hindu tradition of the Tamil-speaking South of India, there are other points of contact between the human and the divine realms. One of the most widely recognized, especially in the mythology associated with sacred marriage at Madurai, is the king. As we shall see, the king is the classic representative par excellence of the people he rules: he establishes alliances between the people of his kingdom and the divine realm, he seeks divine assistance on their behalf, and, on occasion, is himself regarded as a divinity. Since, once this occurs, all legitimate heirs to the throne become at least partly divine, the king becomes the focal point for juxtaposing the human and the divine realms. "Divine kingship" like "sacred marriage" is a metaphor, and it is particularly appropriate to use these metaphors together. Inasmuch as kings are divine, they or their offspring can marry humans. Kings, deities, and humans share in the obligation to marry. *Sacred marriage* and *divine kingship* are terms which, when used together, make metaphorical sense. As metaphors, they sustain each other: they fit together in an appropriate way, though they do not fit together necessarily. There are occasions when one can be found without the other. But they do "fit," to use another metaphor, aesthetically, conceptually, and religiously.

One more thing needs to be said about divine kingship in the context of Tamil-speaking Hindus. From the Tamil perspective, the English term *divine kingship* is redundant. A Tamil king (*iṟaivaṉ*) is by nature divine. The same term can mean either "god" or "king" or both, depending on the situation (*TL*, 367; *DED*, 41; Hart 1975, 17ff.). The Tamil term for king thus suggests, in itself, a similar transaction between two contexts (the human and the divine) as does the English term *divine kingship.* There are, of course, unkind kings, even in India. But there are also unkind gods who do nasty things to mortals (e.g., *TVP* I.13.1–20; I.14.1–59; I.18.1–19; and II.19.1–17). Whether a king is good or bad, however, does not change the fact that he constitutes a point of contact between the human and the divine. He can be more or less worthy of the office he holds, but the nature of his office is not affected.

Metaphors in Myths/Symbols in Rituals

Religious metaphors usually appear in religious myths, that is, in narrative accounts that tell us what deities do, among themselves and in their relationships with humans. Often, these metaphors suggest analogies between human experience and divine acts or attitudes. God can be referred to as Shepherd, King, Father, and Son[7]—all in what devotees perceive to be a coherent body

of mythology. Used together, these metaphors are not necessarily perceived as contradictory. A good example would be the images of Śiva presented in the Sanskrit purāṇic tradition: he can be, depending on the circumstances, a celibate ascetic, a happily married man, and an erotic seducer (O'Flaherty 1973). Often, particular subgroups within a tradition will focus on certain of these metaphors, relegating others to positions of lesser importance. When devotees focus on one metaphor, it is not uncommon for them to sustain that metaphor in such a way that new insights or images emerge. Occasionally, a metaphor may be sustained in such a way that it is uniquely associated with a particular community of devotees, an identifiable sect, or even a separate tradition. The Christian and the Judaic traditions, for example, speak of a supreme deity who is male. But when it comes to sustaining the metaphor, and to talking about the deity as father and son, the two traditions part company. And in the Christian community, there are those who choose to sustain the kinship metaphor even further. In speaking of the Mother of God, Mary, as worthy of religious devotion, Roman Catholics set themselves apart from most Protestant Christians.

Religious rituals, the only kind of ritual with which I am here concerned, do not require metaphors. Religious rituals are customary acts and procedures performed by people. There are mythic accounts of deities performing rituals, of course, but these accounts do not constitute ritual. They are myths *about* ritual. Often, ritual acts or procedures are performed with some awareness of the presence or existence of supernatural beings, usually deities. Rituals may be nonverbal procedures: while some rituals involve the use of verbal metaphor, others can be completely nonverbal. In the Roman Catholic Mass, for example, a priest may say to a devotee as he (the priest) distributes the bread, "This is the body of Christ." If he is in a hurry, the priest may not bother with the metaphor. In either case, neither the priest nor the devotee is likely to regard what goes on simply as a free meal. It is likely that both will have some awareness that what is done is more than just one person's giving food to another. Precisely what the act means is another issue altogether. Indeed, theological debates over questions of transubstantiation have made this lack of agreement quite evident (*ERE* 5: 557–66). At the least, the bread, given and received in this ritual context, is a symbol. It suggests other contexts, one of which may be that paradigmatic context in which Jesus, according to Christian mythology, distributed bread to his disciples just before his death. As a symbol, then, the bread may juxtapose two contexts: the human (the here and now) and the paradigmatic divine context when God incarnate also distributed bread to devotees. Of course, individual Christians might well associate communion with other contexts as well. Some associate it with Jesus' death and resurrection: the bread is lifeless substance before it is eaten but after it is eaten it provides nourishment, becoming part of a living human body. Others may associate it with a family meal: the assembly of devotees thus becomes a "family" in which the Father (note that the priest's title is Father) distributes food at

the table, referred to in ritual as "the Lord's table." The metaphor is further sustained by certain communities of devotees who call themselves "brothers and sisters in Christ."

Like metaphors in mythology, symbolic acts and objects in ritual often suggest transactions between the human context on one hand and the divine context on the other. If these symbolic acts and objects are to be explained from the point of view of devotees, metaphors are needed. Metaphors are needed because they do in words what symbols do in actions: they take account of the two contexts, the human and the divine.

Of course, it would be possible to explain ritual without religious metaphors. Sigmund Freud, for example, has described the Roman Catholic Mass in terms of the primal horde's murder and eating of its father. A psychological myth, incorporating appropriate metaphors (the bread is the primal father; devotees are cannibalistic, murderous brothers, etc.) would be considered adequate from his perspective (Freud, 255–81). But this explanation would not represent adequately what most devotees perceive. Nor is it the case that any single metaphor is adequate to explain the perceptions of all devotees. The sacred marriage of Madurai demonstrates this rather dramatically.

We shall see in chapter four that when it comes to celebrating the annual festival rituals in the city of Madurai, devotees can differ radically in their explanations of what is actually happening. The experience of the ritual can generate widely varying interpretations. Or, to put it differently, a variety of myths can fit the rituals. Usually, participants in the ritual events do not tend to find this state of affairs particularly disturbing. They do not, that is, until someone, working from the assumption that there is a single, correct, or definitive myth, presents his or her understanding as such, as definitive. An Indian newspaper reporter from Madras discovered this when he presented only one of three current myths as an account of what occurred in the annual festival of Madurai. In a subsequent letter to the editor of the newspaper, a rather impassioned devotee took strong exception to the newspaper report, claiming—correctly so—that it represented a biased, sectarian position (Hudson 1971, p. 220, note 77). In this particular case, a devotee insisted on the right to adopt a completely different metaphoric explanation of the city's festivities. He experienced not a drama of marriage, but a pilgrimage. In this sense, the metaphors a devotee uses, and the mythology which incorporates these metaphors into a narrative framework, dictate the reality a devotee perceives. Or, as Lakoff and Johnson (3) put it, "our conceptual system is largely metaphorical . . . the way we think, and what we experience, . . . is very much a matter of metaphor." The extent, then, to which a person or a tradition chooses to adopt, sustain, or ignore the sacred marriage metaphor determines the way that person understands specific ritual events normally associated by a vast majority with the event of a sacred marriage. I examine in chapter four how this dynamic works when various traditions participate together in a large urban festival. And in chapter six, I return to a discussion of what it means

to sustain the metaphor of sacred marriage, and of how the natural process of sustaining that metaphor generates for devotees what I call theological and devotional "options."

Sacred Marriage in Hinduism: An Overview

Even a casual acquaintance with popular Hindu mythologies about the exploits of deities will reveal an unusual emphasis on the importance of deities' being married. Louis Dumont notes,

> Nowhere else . . . has the hint which nature offers in the complementarity of the sexes been put to use so lavishly as in India: witness the extreme stress on marriage, [and] the association of gods with their consorts. [1965, 93]

This particular study deals with the marriage of the deity Śiva with a female who is understood to be one of the many forms of his goddess-wife Pārvatī. I shall concentrate on a particular religious document, a particular temple, a particular festival, a particular form of Pārvatī, that of Mīnākṣi, "the fish-eyed goddess," and a particular form of Śiva, that of Sundareśvara, "the beautiful lord." But the particularity of the study will not, I hope, lead readers to the conclusion that the marriage of deities is the unique concern of Hindus in any single sect, locale, temple, or linguistic region. Though it is rare that the great deities confine themselves to a single spouse, it is not at all rare that deities be subject to the expectation devotees have that deities will marry. Unmarried male deities are regarded as insufficient, indeed, as incomplete; unmarried female deities are dangerous. Let me be more specific here, for this last point is basic. Goddesses, when they are unmarried, are regarded as uncontrolled, vicious, and malevolent (Babb, 137–48). For example, much of the mythology describing the fierce fever goddess Māriyammaṉ addresses the reasons why this goddess is either single or widowed: men either fear to marry her or, when they have, she has murdered her spouse (Brubaker; Whitehead). Even festivals celebrated in her honor reenact, in certain cases, the death of her husband, a death which leaves her ritually and mythologically a widow (Moreno-Arcas 1984a; Beck 1981). Single, the goddess is a menace. Particularly in southern India, women are said to possess an unusually powerful sacred force, termed *aṇaṅku*, a force which must be controlled primarily through their relationship to a proper male in marriage (Hart 1973).

Unmarried male deities, though not necessarily dangerous,[8] are incomplete, even powerless. This is particularly true in the mythology and theology which deals with Śiva. Śiva's wife is commonly referred to as *Śakti*, a term connoting divine energy or power. A Tamil proverb, which also has its Hindi and Bengali counterparts, captures well the sense most Hindus have of Śiva's need to be regarded as half of a marital pair: "Without Śakti, Śiva is a corpse." The

aniconic form of Śiva represents the union of the male and female in dynamic tension: the *liṅga*, or phallus, erect within the *yoni*, or vagina. When Śiva is represented anthropomorphically, he is most frequently represented with one of his wives or in his androgynous form (*Ardhanārī*), where the right half of his body is male and the left half is female.

But it is not only in iconography and Śaiva mythology that we find a consistent emphasis on the importance of male/female complementarity. Sometimes it appears in familial terms: the male and female, together, are the very core of the family structure, and therefore their domesticated union is the source of nurture, of that early social context to which devotees owe their very existence. Such an emphasis we find, for example, in the Tiruvāṉaikkā Temple of southern India. There, in rituals that involve mutual interaction and cooperation between images of the god and goddess we can see a concern for the intimacy of home and the interdependence it both requires and reflects between male and female. In classical Hindu thought, attachments to the family eventually need to be renounced. Of this tension, Paul Younger writes,

> While ardent devotees of Śiva in other forms and of the goddess in other forms spoke to me of their disappointment at the domesticized interdependence of the two deities in this temple, the regular worshippers clearly saw that interdependence as the very heart of the divine life. [Younger 1982, 256]

The dualism of the influential *Sāṁkhya* philosophical system personifies the two ultimate realities, *puruṣa* ("spirit") and *prakṛti* ("matter") as, respectively, male and female. *Prakṛti*, understood as matter or substance, is regarded in this scheme as the ultimate cause of the world. It is the eternal, active, unconscious principle, always in flux. Only when *prakṛti* unites with *puruṣa*, regarded as spirit, as the intelligible principle whose essence is consciousness, does the world come into existence.

We see especially in the development of the tantric tradition an elaborate cosmological, mythological, and ritual scheme which seeks to achieve at the individual, microcosmic level a primordial union between male and female principles. Tantric theory has influenced the development of early Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, but it is with Hinduism that I am here concerned. Sexual union (*maithuna*) has always been one of tantra's prominent symbols, for the act itself represents the reintegration of the male and female principles. It was from the primordial separation of male and female and their consequent mutual interaction that were born the things of this world, a world which is chaotically multiple rather than a world which is united, at one, peaceful. "Left-handed" tantric rituals in their most esoteric form enact this primordial unity by celebrating temporary marriages between males and females who, during the ritual, were understood to personify Śiva and Śakti (Douglas, 83ff.). The seeker of salvation, of Brahman as the union of all opposites, understands the multiplicity of the world as supreme delusion (*māyā*). Through training, medita-

tion, and participation in the rituals, s/he experiences in *maithuna*, or sexual union, the oneness which is the nature of the cosmos. In the polarity which tantric theory posits, the male is understood to be the personification of quiescence and wisdom; the female embodies activity, energy, and passion.

The tantric tradition has usually been associated either with the worship of Śiva or with the Śākta system, a system which posits the priority of the female principle, of Śakti. Still, Śāktas insist on the complementarity of male and female, and on the need for their union as the ultimate expression of the structure of the cosmos.

It is not my intention to trace the theme of male/female complementarity through its historical development in Hinduism, but it certainly appears quite early. In the *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (IV.3.21), for example we find that the experience of sexual union between husband and wife is compared with the experience of the union of the individual soul (*ātman*) with the Universal Soul (*Brahman*). In his suggestive comparative study of the revered Hindu philosopher Śaṅkara and the court poet Amaru, Lee Siegel discusses the classic Hindu doctrine that, at base, the world of experience is a world of illusion:

> The revelation that ultimately all is illusory, that in the end nothing matters, inspired and gave license both to rigorous asceticism and to wholehearted passion. The waters of equanimity and the fires of exuberance come from the same source. The very gods that teach and exemplify modes of liberation give themselves up to extravagant lust—Brahmā commits incest with his daughter, Viṣṇu makes love to sixteen thousand women, Śiva violates the wives of the Pine Forest Sages. Religious renunciation and erotic annunciation converge. [12]

At this point, the careful reader will have noticed that I have been discussing sexuality and marriage as though they were the same. Clearly they are not. In the mythic accounts several deities are involved in explicitly extramarital affairs. We can discuss tantric rituals in the context of marriage because, in most cases, the rituals involve a temporary "marriage" in which the two partners become homologized to the husband and wife pairing of Śiva and Śakti. But in their mythologies both Kṛṣṇa and Śiva are involved in sexual relationships with females to whom they are not married. Indeed, much of the mythology dealing with Rādhā, the consort of Kṛṣṇa, specifies that she is married to someone else. Especially in Bengali Vaiṣṇava traditions, much is made of the fact that Rādhā is what they term *parakīyā* (she who is another's) rather than *svakīyā* (she who is one's own, i.e., a spouse). Particularly among one group of Bengali Vaiṣṇavas, the Sahajiyās ("the Natural Ones"), the sentiment has been that marriage and true love are inimical. Marriage involves possession, responsibility, obligation, self-interest, and structure. Spontaneous love, however, especially when it involves a woman married to another, includes periods of separation: neither truly possesses the other. It involves spontaneity, risk, and ideally, at least, no long-term structured responsibilities (Dimock

1966, 1968). One way whereby sex in the context of marriage has been distinguished from the sexual relationship outside marriage involves the differences between two kinds of love, *kama* and *prema*. *Kama*, the sort of sexual love characteristic of marriage, involves a self-seeking pleasure. The love which the *gopīs* have for Kṛṣṇa, however, is the opposite of *kama*. Frédérique Marglin (1982) has demonstrated that *prema*, in being the antithesis of *kama*, need not be associated with passionlessness or unerotic love.[9] *Prema*, the sort of love which is concerned with the pleasure or welfare of the other person, rather than of the self, exists in many forms: lover and beloved, parent and child, or even among siblings. When it is used in the context of male-female romance, it involves lovemaking in which the male does not ejaculate. When ejaculation occurs the pleasure is over, the erotic tension is gone. And it leads to begetting children, to responsibility: ". . . whereas in the divine play of Kṛṣṇa there is continuous (*nitya*) pleasure and no children. The *gopīs* are not impregnated" (306).

Central to Marglin's article is the distinction between two modes of relationship with Kṛṣṇa: (1) his eight wives in the city of Dvāraka regard him as supreme lord, the husband to whom wives owe deference and for whom the hierarchical quality of the marital bond governs all acts. Kṛṣṇa's lordship (*aiśvarya*) in marriage is contrasted with (2) the equality and spontaneity characteristic of his relationship with the *gopīs*. In Brindāvan, where he sports with them, the realm of "sweetness" (*mādhurya*) prevails: no hierarchy here, no responsibility, only the joy of extemporaneous love play.

Considerable theological debate, however, centered on the question as to whether or not Rādhā was simply Kṛṣṇa's consort, or whether they actually married (Dimock 1966, 200ff.). In some cases, theologians declared that deities do what humans may not, and that Kṛṣṇa's example cannot serve as the model for human devotees. But later traditions, somewhat embarrassed by Kṛṣṇa's dalliance with Rādhā outside the bounds of marriage, began to insist that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were spouses. In both the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* (Brown 1982, 57–71) and in the tenth act of the *Lalitamādhava*, the two undergo marriage ceremonies before their sexual union. One theologian, Jiva Gosvāmin, went even further to insist on the essential conjugal quality of the relationship between Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā: he said that Rādhā could not belong to another man because Sanskrit poetic theory traditionally did not recognize a *parakīyā* woman as having a primary role in drama. He also insisted that the married cowherd women (*gopīs*) with whom Kṛṣṇa had his sexual encounters, and of whom Rādhā was one,

> had never really consummated their marriages. By the *māyā*-power of Kṛṣṇa, shapes like the *gopīs*, not the *gopīs* themselves, had slept with their husbands. Furthermore, the *gopīs* are really *śaktis* of Kṛṣṇa, essential to and in some way identical with him. Therefore they are really *svakīyā*, really his own. [Dimock 1968, 56][10]

We can see, then, that the categories of lover and spouse do not always go together, even in the later and more puritanical strains of Vaiṣṇavism. Nevertheless, they are frequently associated: indeed, tradition allows for the possibility that any form of sexual intercourse between a man and woman *ipso facto* creates a marriage. A good example would be Margaret Egnor's (4–7) recounting of the life story of a woman named Lakshmi who, after being raped, felt she could be married to no other man but her sadistic attacker. The tradition stipulates eight types of marriage. The first four types, distinguished in the *Mānama Dharma Sastra*, are honorable ones, and regular unions valid for Brahmins. They are termed *brāhma*, *daiva*, *ārṣa*, and *prājāpatya*, and differ in terms of arrangements made for the wedding and the dowry. In each case, however, the arrangements for the marriage are made with the consent of the family of the woman (who must be a virgin) involved. The *āsura* marriage is a marriage by purchase, acceptable only for the *vaiśya* and *śudra* castes. *Gāndharva* marriages are what we would call love affairs: no ceremony takes place and only the man and woman are involved in the decision. *Rakṣana* marriage, or marriage by capture, is acceptable only for *kśatriya* castes, and the last form, *paiśāca*, involves the rape of a woman who is mad, intoxicated, or asleep. (Pandey 159–70; Dumézil, 17–59).

According to this classification just about any kind of sexual union between male and female can be regarded as a "marriage."[11] For deities, polygamy and reappearances—in different forms for Śiva and different *avatāras* for Viṣṇu—are always possible: this enables them to have many wives, in many places, under many circumstances, and under several guises. Also, deities in India need not confine themselves to other deities as possible marriage partners. This is especially true of the two most active male deities of the Hindu pantheon, Śiva and Viṣṇu, and it applies to the best known *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa. Often, they marry women who are understood to be human, or at least partly human. One of the difficulties in talking here about divine-human interaction in the context of marriage, however, is that the distinctions between human and divine are not always easy to make, either in mythology or in iconography. In his analysis of sexual pairings in Indian art, Heinz Mode (19) observes that "it is difficult to distinguish between heavenly and earthly pairs of lovers." Hindu deities as well as devotees live in a cosmos of unusual upward and downward mobility: humans may become deities and deities may become humans. In some cases, deities who are jealous or unkind do their best to thwart mortals whose penance or sacrifices are about to gain for them status as a divinity (e.g., *TVP* I.4.1–5). In other cases, deities appear in the forms of mortals. Knowing this, Hindus have devised a system for distinguishing deities from humans. According to tradition, flower garlands deities wear do not fade. Moreover, deities do not blink, perspire, or leave footprints. One of the Tamil terms for the deities is *imaiyār*, "those who do not blink." And when they walk, they hover, it seems, imperceptible millimeters above the ground. Occasionally, deities assume human form as a demotion, as a penalty for some divine indis-

cretion, as occurs with the goddess on which this study is focused, Mīnākṣī, and her two sons (*TVP* III.57.1–20). At other times assuming a human, mortal form is a voluntary act of grace, a self-imposed exile of sorts among the less fortunate. One of the more graphic representations of such a world in which rebirth, for deities as well as for humans, is a fact of life, of many lives, is the Indian children's board game called *Mokśa Patamu*, or Snakes and Ladders. Using dice, participants make their way alternately up and down the ladder of rebirths, and their born state is determined by acts committed as deities, animals, or humans. Rebirths in various animal, human, and divine forms are predicated on the notion that every action performed (in this case, determined by the block on which you land) has its absolute result. A generous act can send you directly to one of the highest heavens; a crime will cause rebirth as an animal or a low-caste human. In part due to the essential continuity of such a world, one in which there are no radical disjunctures between the animal and human or the human and the divine, some scholars have chosen to describe the Indian cosmos as monistic (Marriott 1976a; 1976b). Here, there are no sharp divisions or dualities between heaven and earth or human and divine.

Crucial for this book is the fact that in much of the epic and purāṇic mythological tradition, deities and humans interact constantly in the context of marriage. Because I will be discussing the human, and Hindu, understanding of how deities marry, it will be necessary to discuss Indian conceptions of marriage: what it is, why it occurs, and the conditions under which it is acceptable. Much of chapter five will deal with these issues, but parts of this discussion cannot wait: how a tradition characterizes marriage will determine much about the understandings that tradition has of what its deities are up to when they marry.

Two Generalizations about Marriage in India

We can, in general, speak of a pan-Indian "culture of kinship," (Inden and Nicholas, xii) and two marriage rules in particular tend to be included in this common culture. The first reflects what people understand a marriage to be. Significant for my discussion about the marriages of deities is, first of all, the fact that an act of marriage constitutes the forging of alliances, or the reaffirmation of alliances already established. When humans or deities marry they are entering into alliances with their spouses and those whom their spouses represent. This is especially true when the marriages are carefully arranged and publicly celebrated. As with individuals, so with deities: the marriage constitutes something of a covenant with a specific community of people. The text on which this study concentrates offers an excellent example: when Śiva marries the daughter of a Pāṇḍya king, he enters into alliance with the Pāṇḍya monarchy. He becomes their son-in-law, king, and deity; they become his kinfolk, subjects, and devotees. This is because marriage in the Indian tradition constitutes an alliance of lineages, not simply of individuals. And it is why

marriage is, above all, a family or caste matter. When proper marriages are arranged they are matters of agreement not so much for the man and woman who are marrying (who may be among the last to be consulted), but for the lineage elders. Irawati Karve (85) claims that, "The ancient Aryan [marriage] system was a system of alliances . . . thus creating a confederation of families allied by the ties of marriage." Writing in 1944, William Archer (1985:4) put it this way:

> As a result of the union of persons, the two families are also united and the boy and the girl come together not simply as individuals but as members of their families. The action not only transforms two persons but it puts two groups into a new and vital relation with each other.

Nur Yalman (150) notes that the same dynamic operates in Śrī Laṅkā. In one sense, this function of marriage is not unique to the area of the Indian subcontinent. Lévi-Strauss (1969a) has argued that the nearly universal incest prohibition in marriage rules "expresses the transition from the natural fact of consanguinity to the cultural fact of alliance" (30), and that "marriage is regarded everywhere as a particularly favorable occasion for the initiation or development of a cycle of exchanges" (63). Marriages outside the group of close blood relations encourage, indeed, mandate cooperation and mutual support among the families involved.

In the elaborate rituals of marriage arrangements and negotiations in India (for deities as well as for humans) we can see the nature of marriage as strategic alliance in unusually bold silhouettes. In fact, in India one of the primary obligations of relatives by marriage is that they can always be counted on as allies to provide assistance in times of need or emergency (Karve, 75–85).[12] To enter into a marriage alliance with another lineage is, at the same time, to enter into a social, religious, and political alliance with those same people. Marriage, in establishing alliances, is a means of increasing the power and hegemony which the parties to the marriage exercise over a given geographic or social space.[13] The most frequent kind of sacred marriage we find in India tends to be that in which a male deity marries a female who is either wholly or partially human. In these cases, the male assumes structured responsibilities and obligations for the human community his spouse represents. Exactly how this works, we shall see in chapter three.

The King's Daughter, Hypergamy, and the *Svayaṃvara*

The second marriage rule applying to humans but quite relevant to my discussion of the marriages of deities is that women should marry hypergamously and men should marry hypogamously. In other words, a female should be given in marriage to a male whose social ranking is higher than the ranking of the female's father. Marriage for the female should be a social step up. All other elements being equal, my refusal to give my daughter in marriage to a

man is a clear statement that I do not believe the suitor is worthy of her because he is not superior to me.

Normally, the system works fairly well. But it could pose problems for those families who occupy especially high social positions. What happens, for instance, when a daughter comes from a very highly placed family? Whom shall she marry?

> . . . in the higher castes, there are not enough men to meet the demand and . . . this has led to various social evils including female infanticide and 'Kulinism,' a system of wholesale polygamy among Kulin Brahmins, some of whom were known to have married upwards of a hundred wives. . . . [*ERE* 3:233]

In the context of sacred marriage, quite frequently we find that it is kings rather than high-caste Brahmins who face the problem. A king is considered supremely superior. He is regarded as partially divine (Gonda 1966, 1, 24, 25, 30). What he does is the norm for all men in the kingdom (Heestermann, 2–5). So when his daughter marries, he faces the difficult task of somehow finding a man worthy of her. Obviously, for the supreme ruler of the land, this would be no easy assignment. The dilemma is succinctly illustrated in the lament of King Bhīsmaka, who searches high and low for a suitable groom to wed his daughter Rukminī: ". . . who is suited to be the bridegroom? Either the son of a god, or a *muni*, or the accomplished son of a king . . ." (*Brahm.* IV.105.11–19). The king's lament summarizes neatly the three possible solutions which we find in the texts. The first is the *svayaṃvara* marriage. "It consists, for a person occupying a high social rank, in the privilege of giving his daughter in marriage to a man of status who has performed some great feat" (Lévi-Strauss 1969a, 475).[14] The *svayaṃvara* relieves the jam at the top of the system by permitting the socially superior woman to choose a spouse (Sergent, 186–91). Often the *svayaṃvara* involves kingly families in India. It is something of a premarriage ceremony, and the young men invited compete in contests of archery, spear throwing, or other martial arts appropriate to *kśatriyas*, members of the traditional warrior caste. At the end, the woman in whose honor the *svayaṃvara* is celebrated chooses her husband on the basis of performance in the competition (Stutley and Stutley, 295).[15]

The second possibility can be seen as a variation of the *svayaṃvara*. It involves a king's giving his daughter to a sage or *muni* whose spiritual powers constitute a laudable feat. Here, spiritual prowess, rather than martial prowess, becomes the criterion for marriage selection. And well it should be: most often the sage or *muni* tends to be a Brahmin and therefore unsuited to feats of martial prowess.[16] It seems that if a king gives his daughter to a member of the *kśatriya* caste, he must give her to someone who excels *as a kśatriya*, that is, someone with unusual martial capacities. But if she is to be given to a Brahmin, the Brahmin must excel *as a Brahmin*. Martial ability is inappropriate for the Brahmin. He must be adept in spiritual matters.

The third possibility, and the one with which I am primarily concerned, is that in which the king's daughter marries a deity. Sometimes, the *svayaṃvara* motif is the context for arranging such a marriage: the deity actually takes the form of some worthy suitor and defeats his competitors in the contest to win the maiden's hand. This tends to be Viṣṇu's style: Viṣṇu wins Śrīmati, daughter of King Triśanku, in competition against Nārada and Parvata (*Liṅga* 2.5.1–59.), as he also wins the daughter of King Silanidhi in competition with Nārada (*Śiva* 1.3.1–59). When Viṣṇu competes, the criterion for the choice of a groom is neither martial nor spiritual prowess. It tends to be appearances, and in each of these cases Viṣṇu causes his competitors to take on the appearance of monkeys.

How Three Male Deities Marry: Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, and Śiva

In general, the Sanskrit materials portray Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa as being rather anxious to marry, indeed, almost profligate about it. In one case, Viṣṇu actually abducts Rukmini, the daughter of King Bhismaka, on the night before her scheduled wedding with another (*Vishnu* 5.26. and *Brahm. Purāṇa* 4.108.1–14). The fact that he already had 16,007 other wives, as the text clearly indicates, seems to make no difference. In another case, Viṣṇu deceptively takes the form of Baladeva to marry the daughter of King Raivata (*Vishnu* 4.1). Kṛṣṇa, like Viṣṇu, is a deity more prone to marry royal women. In one case he marries the princess Aniruddha, the granddaughter of his foe Rukmin (*Vishnu* 5.28), and in another he marries Daivaki, the daughter of King Devaka (*Brahm.* 4.7.1–16).

Śiva's style differs significantly. He does not seek out royal marriages. In the major texts, we usually find that while he is regarded as married, in some sense, to a variety of females, the two marriages which are most elaborately described include those with Satī, the daughter of Dakṣa, and with Pārvatī. But Dakṣa is not a king and so a royal alliance is not involved here. Frequently, when we find village goddesses, it is to Śiva that they are wed. Village goddesses, however, tend not to be regarded as having royal roots; Brahmin roots in some cases, but not royal. His only marriage with a king's daughter is that with Pārvatī, the daughter of Himavat, the king of the Northern mountain ranges.[17] But here, he is reluctant to marry: a far cry indeed from the enthusiasm either of Viṣṇu or of Kṛṣṇa. Śiva, after all, is the archetypal ascetic, the one who has renounced the life of the householder. Consistently he refuses Pārvatī's advances and discourages her performing austerities (*tapas*) to win him as a husband (*Śiva* III.12.4–33, III.13.1–54; *Vāmana* 25.34–37; *Brahm.* I.6.16; Dimmitt and van Buitenen, p.223). Finally, when he does consent to marriage, it is not because he really wants to marry: by one account the gods are concerned that Pārvatī's penance (*tapas*), intended to win Śiva, is so intense that it generates heat sufficient to burn up the world. Viṣṇu or Brahmā intercede to convince

Śiva to marry her in order to avert this danger (*Śiva* III.23.26–31; *Vāmana* 25.25–28). By another account, the gods ask Śiva to marry so that he will have a son capable of killing the demon Tāraka (*Śiva* III.24.16–19). And even when he is convinced that perhaps he should marry, Śiva is reluctant to do so in a formal ceremony—this silly "earthly convention," as he puts it (*Śiva* III.29.27–40).

Another difference in Śiva's style focuses on the role the woman has in bringing about the royal marriage alliance. When Viṣṇu marries into royalty, the decision to do so tends to be his alone. Even when the alliance he proposes is rejected, he is not deterred. He simply abducts his royal bride and, if necessary, defeats in battle those who oppose his alliance (*Vishnu* 5.26.; *Brahm.* 4.108.1–14). In general, Viṣṇu's brides are more passive. Even when a *svayaṃvara* marriage is involved, Viṣṇu arranges matters in such a way that the woman really has no choice (*Liṅga* 2.5.1–59; *Śiva* 1.3.1–50). But when Śiva is involved in an alliance, it is frequently the female who initiates the marriage. Pārvatī, in fact, decides to perform austerities to win Śiva as husband even when her parents object. One of her names, *Umā* ("O, don't"), is etymologically, and spuriously, attributed to her mother's response to her decision to try to gain Śiva as a husband (*Śiva* III.23.5ff.).

Underlying the differences between Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Kṛṣṇa is, however, the common awareness that when a deity marries a royal daughter, he gains dominion over the kingdom into which he marries. Significantly, it is Rukmin, the brother of the princess Rukmini, who objects most vociferously to Kṛṣṇa's marriage with his sister (*Vishnu* 5.26; *Brahm.* 4.108.1–14). Rukmin is first in line to inherit the kingdom, and he obviously does not want to share his authority with Kṛṣṇa. Rukmin knows that to ally oneself with such a powerful figure is, in fact, to end up under his dominance.

Neither is Himavat so sure that he wants his daughter to marry Śiva. Again, there is no question that the deity has superior powers. The problem is that Śiva is something of a rogue: he is unpredictable and uncouth. Even the *Śiva Purāṇa* (III.25.54) admits that Viṣṇu would probably be a better husband for Pārvatī. And after the marriage, we can see that the father's concern for the future of his kingdom under Śiva's guidance is justified. So caught up is Śiva in making love to his new bride that he forgets all mundane responsibilities. The world is threatened as a result (*Śiva* 4.1.44; *Brahm.* IV.56.40–44; *Vāmana* 28.31). Finally, the gods agree that someone has to bring Śiva back to his less sensual senses. Agni is assigned the task of somehow interrupting the couple in one case (*Vāmana* 28.42), and Viṣṇu takes on the thankless job in the *Śiva Purāṇa* (IV.2.1–16).

Given the general marriage custom of hypergamy for females, it becomes easier to understand why we find so few instances of royal men marrying female deities or celestials in the Sanskrit materials. First of all, princes and kings are supposed to "marry down": they need not find a woman superior to them. In fact, they should not. Thus, it is perfectly acceptable for King Śaṃtanu to



A Map of India

marry the beautiful daughter of the chieftain of a lowly tribe of fishermen (*Mahāb.* I.90.15; *Dēvi Bhag.* III.27.1–48).[18]

Though there are occasional exceptions, the pattern seems clear: it is more appropriate, and less ambiguous, when a royal female marries a deity. Sometimes these female royalty-male divinity marriages constitute the beginning of a royal-divine alliance. But they also serve to recelebrate or to redefine a relationship which existed previously. This tends to be the case when the king's daughter has, herself, some previous claim to divine status. King Trīsanku's daughter, Srīmatī, for example, was born when the king's wife ate a fruit given her by Viṣṇu (*Liṅga* II.5.1–59). Srīmatī's marriage with Viṣṇu simply restates in a more formal way the royal-divine alliance. King Janaka's daughter Sītā was born miraculously from a furrow in the earth (*Agni* V.9–12). Her partial divinity is thus reaffirmed in her later marriage with Rāma. Similarly, Kalavati, the daughter of a king, was born out of a sacrifice and eventually married Vrisbhanū, a form of Viṣṇu (*Brahm.* IV.107–31).

In the chapters that follow, I will discuss the sacred marriage of the deities Śiva and Pārvatī as it is celebrated annually in one particular temple in southern India and as it is described in one particular text. But I have chosen to consider the marriage of Madurai in the context of other relevant issues, including the history of Tamil literature (chapter two), the synthetic character of urban religious ritual (chapter four), the functions of marriage in India (chapter five), and kinship theory (chapter four). In chapter six I deal with the devotional metaphors generated by a postulated sacred marriage: with how a metaphoric marriage generates metaphoric kinship terms which devotees use in an attempt to understand who deities are and what their relationship is to humans.

II.

The Story of Śiva's Sacred Games

A Text and Its Contexts

The summer of 1969 was especially devastating in the southeastern portion of India around the ancient Hindu pilgrimage city of Madurai. The expected rains of early summer did not come, and crop failures were widespread. Most private wells were dry by May, and municipal authorities were forced to ration drinking water. Long lines to draw water from public faucets were common. The district collector's attempt to alleviate the problem by sponsoring and financing "Varuna Japam [prayer] to propitiate the rain god" in the city's most famous temple had no significant effect (*Indian Express* of Madurai, 24 March 1969). Members of the political party known as the Forward Bloc proposed another solution in the Madurai Municipal Council. They claimed that the reason for Madurai's drought was the inauspicious orientation of the large (about twenty-five feet high) carved granite statue of an elephant at Madurai's northeastern corner, an intersection known as Yānaikkal ("Elephant Stone"). The remedy, also endorsed by the Jana Sangh party, would be, they said, to turn the elephant in a direction facing away from, rather than toward, the city, since the lord Śiva once turned a threatening elephant away when it was about to destroy the city. Lightning struck the grounds of the Municipal Hall as the proposal was made. Still the chairman of the council dismissed the proposal, unwilling to acknowledge the lightning as a divine sign (*Indian Express* of Madurai, 24 June 1969). By 30 July the council's refusal to consider the proposal caused Forward Bloc members to walk out of the proceedings (*Indian Express* of Madurai, 30 July 1969). But eventually the resolution passed, and construction workers with cranes reversed the statue's orientation. Four days later it began to rain in Madurai and it rained daily for eight days. The drought was over.

The story of Śiva's saving the town of Madurai by turning an elephant into stone is one of sixty-four separate divine exploits of the deity Śiva in the city of Madurai as they are narrated in a document entitled the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam*, "The Story" (*Purāṇam*) of the "Sacred" (*Tiru*) "Games" (*Viḷaiyāṭṭu*) (Parañcōtimuṉivar [1927] 1965). I shall refer to this document hereafter in two ways. In bibliographic references I abbreviate it as *TVP*. In my discussions of it, I call it *Śiva's Sacred Games*, for when Tamils hear the title, they always and immediately associate it with the appearance of Śiva in Madurai. Though there are, as we shall see, many versions of Śiva's exploits in the city of Madurai, the most elaborate and poetically accomplished is Parañcōti's. There is little

doubt that the most popular and the most celebrated of the document's sixty-four incidents or "games" is the story of the marriage of Śiva with a local girl named Taṭātakai, later known as Mīnākṣī. She was, according to tradition, a direct descendant of the Madurai Pāṇḍya kings, and she once reigned over Madurai as an unmarried queen before she met and married Śiva. Hindu devotees of Madurai, indeed throughout much of southern India, know the sixty-four stories about Śiva and Mīnākṣī in varying detail. But they do not, in many cases, know that these stories come from a particular text. Still, they know the stories, and they live with an intimate awareness of the divine presence, a presence to which the stories, the landscape, the temples, and even the rain, on occasion, testify.

The Text as Revelation, Theology, and History

The title of this document is, in itself, worthy of some explanation. In representing divine activities as "games," "amusements," or "sports," the tradition seeks to make a specific statement about the absolute autonomy of divine will. Divine acts, we must understand, are never done under compulsion. They are, from the human point of view, incomprehensible, and therefore without any perceivable purpose or objective. True, the divine can be compassionate, gracious, or even generous at times. But in the final analysis, it is unfathomable for humans. The divine does whatever the divine feels like doing, when s/he feels like doing it and only because s/he feels like doing it. Who else could so act, and be praised for it, except a deity? More frequently in Hinduism we find the deity Kṛṣṇa characterized as being playful, sporting. The Sanskrit term *līlā* is usually associated with Kṛṣṇa's activity in the world, but in this case, we find that Śiva is so characterized. In *Śiva's Sacred Games* Śiva appears as a deity in Madurai, involving himself in the daily lives of the city's leaders and citizenry. What he does is not frivolous, but it is spontaneous, free, and unpredictable. And, as we shall see, he occasionally "plays" with people, particularly with haughty or self-important Pāṇḍya kings. Śiva occasionally needs to dupe them, scare them, toy with them a bit when their arrogance and power interfere with their ability to be good, appropriately humble kings.

Those familiar with the deity Śiva will know that he appears throughout India in many forms, under many different names. In Madurai, one of the most common terms for him is Sundareśvara, "the beautiful Lord." Occasionally the term Cokkanātar, "the Pure Lord" is used particularly among Brahmin devotees. Another term specific to the Madurai region is Somasundara, which might be translated roughly as "the Beautiful Moonlike One." But the most specific term to describe him as he appears in Madurai is Kalyāṇacuntarar, which means "the Beautiful Lord of Marriage."[1] This is because Sundareśvara is most widely known as the deity whose marriage with the Pāṇḍya daughter occurred in and is associated with the sacred history of the city of Madurai.

Śiva's Sacred Games, then, is the story of how the great deity Śiva came to Madurai, married, and settled there, becoming the city's king and eternal protector.

It is important to point out that while the document emphasizes the activity of Śiva in the city of Madurai, many other deities are involved. By far the most prominent is the local royal daughter Taṭātakai who, once she marries Śiva, becomes the goddess Mīnākṣi. For the sake of clarity, I shall refer to this woman/queen/goddess by the more famous of her names, Mīnākṣi. However the text itself uses this term far less frequently than it uses Taṭātakai. The single most important event in the document is Siva's marriage with Mīnākṣi, the miraculously born daughter of the city's royal leader, a king from the line of the Pāṇḍya family. For the vast majority of devotees of the divine couple of Madurai, Mīnākṣi is more important than Śiva. But if we were to look at the architecture of the temple or read *Śiva's Sacred Games*, we would get quite the opposite impression. Within the temple complex Śiva and Mīnākṣi have their separate shrines, but Śiva's shrine is larger and more centrally located. And, as we shall see in the next chapter, *Śiva's Sacred Games* is a document which casts Śiva unequivocally as the main actor and subject. Despite this, devotees concentrate their worship on the goddess.[2] They visit her shrine first before worshipping Śiva. It is indicative of Mīnākṣi's primacy that Indian immigrants to the United States living in the Houston, Texas area have built a rather impressive five-acre temple complex which they call the Mīnākṣi Temple. Although the temple is dedicated to the triad of Śiva (whom they address as "Sundareśvara"), Mīnākṣi, and Viṣṇu (in the form of Venkateśvara), devotees have established an extended congregation in the Houston area which they call simply the Mīnākṣi Temple Society. Paul Younger (1982, 253) notes a similar dynamic at the Tiruvāṉaikkā temple near Tirucirapaḷḷi, India. He says, "While outsiders refer to Tiruvāṉaikkā as 'a Śiva temple,' most of the worshippers who come to the temple today come primarily to worship the Goddess, Akilāṇṭēśvari." In his excellent book on the priests of the Madurai Mīnākṣi-Sundareśvara Temple, which, significantly, he entitled *Servants of the Goddess*, C. J. Fuller (1984, 8) explains, in speaking of the devotees' relationship with Śiva and Mīnākṣi, that

> [Śiva] is the supreme lord whose paramount concern is for the order of the world, not for the petty difficulties of individual human beings. Only a minority of devotees, usually theologically sophisticated, speak of their devotion for . . . Śiva; for the majority, that sentiment is mainly commanded by the goddess.

In a strict sense, the goddess is closer to the people: according to tradition she was born in Madurai. Śiva came as an outsider, from a distant place, to take up his residence and to rule with her. In the temple as well as in *Śiva's Sacred Games* she is regarded, indeed addressed, as Mother (*ammaṉ*), while Śiva

is approached more formally as Lord (*nāyakaṉ*). As Vasudha Narayanan (225–26) points out, a mother in the Indian family is more likely to be accessible to her children, to mediate between them and their father, for she is less concerned with the demands of hierarchy, order, justice, and structure. She represents qualities of nurturance, compassion, mercy, affection, and accessibility in a way that the father and Lord does not. Little wonder that she is seen as the mediator, as the one to whom devotees would more readily turn.[3] The goddess of Madurai is most frequently known by her Sanskrit name, Mīnākṣī Devi, sometimes transliterated as Meenakshi and transliterated into Tamil as Mīṉāṭci. In Sanskrit, the term means "fish-eyed goddess," an epithet which may not sound particularly flattering to Western ears. But it is complimentary in the Indian context: large, unblinking eyes with dark pupils are considered a mark of human beauty. In addition, there are theological implications to the metaphor which focus on the watchful care a mother fish gives her young (W. N. Brown; *TVP* 1:333; Hudson 1971, 214, note 30). The term is particularly apt for her because the fish was the totem and the symbol of the Pāṇḍya kingdom of the South. Frequently in *Śiva's Sacred Games* we find references to the Tamil equivalent, Aṅkayaṟkaṇṇammai, ("the Mother with Beautiful Fish Eyes").

The name of this woman/goddess, particularly before she married Śiva, is Taṭātakai. This name has less clear etymological roots. Some scholars have tried to trace it to the Tamil words *taṭu*, meaning "to hinder or prohibit" and *kai*, which means "hand." The term is taken to refer to the goddess's hand which does not hinder or ward off devotees, but rather welcomes them invitingly. The goddess is also referred to in the text simply as Pirāṭṭi ("The Lady"), a term which often is added as a suffix to form Taṭātakaippirāṭṭiyār. The popularity of the goddess in Madurai is such that several hagiographic texts have been written describing her youth (e.g., *Maturai Mīṉāṭciyammaṉ* . . . ; *Mīṉāṭciyammai* . . . ; *Maturai Aṅkayaṟkaṇṇammai* . . . ; Rājahaṃsā). The most common source of material about her, however, is *Śiva's Sacred Games*. To a discussion of that text I now turn.

In an important sense, *Śiva's Sacred Games* is history. It is a careful, systematic, and passionate statement about the past of Madurai and of the deities residing there. If we see history as an attempt to understand the past, and to understand how that past informs the lives and perceptions of those for whom it is important (Dilthey, 102–30), we cannot avoid regarding *Śiva's Sacred Games* as a historical document. But it necessarily differs from so-called objective, factual, and scientific history. *Śiva's Sacred Games* is, more accurately, a mythological history, an account of the process of divine revelation. And yet, the events do not occur in primordial time or in some indefinable, archetypal location. Each of the sixty-four games is assigned a specific time, usually in terms of the reign of a Pāṇḍya or a Cōḷa king, and a specific place. The location can be general, such as a seaside village (*TVP* III.57.1–64), or it can be quite specific, as we shall see shortly. It is, in fact, this concern with place (*talam*) which provides *Śiva's Sacred Games* with much of its vitality, indeed, its irrefutability,

in the religious perceptions of devotees today. *Śiva's Sacred Games* is quite different from the sort of history written by such scholars of India as A.K. Nilakanta Sastri (1972, 3) who finds the document "worthless" for his purposes, or Jesudasan and Jesudasan (8), who believe such documents should be "dismissed briefly" by historians. It is different by virtue of its exemption from the need to be verified by anything but the experience of those for whom it is intended.[4] For most devotees epigraphy, inscriptions, numismatics, and geological records do not constitute the primary criteria for verifying the truth of events narrated by *Śiva's Sacred Games*. Devotees need only look around them for verification: they can enter the temple of Śiva and Mīnākṣi and worship these deities there. They can climb the hills around Madurai created by Śiva, and they can bathe in the Vaigai River, which Śiva also created. Of course, other explanations for these things are possible, but they are not necessary: "The most cogent argument for any religious position is that those who adopt it find that it authenticates itself" (W. C. Smith, 51). In this sense, *Śiva's Sacred Games* is not, as Kamil Zvelebil (1974, 171) argues, the product of "totally non-empirical and a-historic patterns of thought." It is simply the product of thought which uses criteria for truth that differ from those used by others.[5]

Śiva's Sacred Games is, in H. Richard Niebuhr's terms, "internal and subjective history" as opposed to "external and objective history" (1962, 60–84). The difference between these two kinds of history cannot be delineated by applying value judgments such as "true" or "false." The difference is one of perspective and of value. Hindu devotees who worship in Madurai, and who do so from the perspective of the sacred history of that city, see Madurai quite differently from the way the casual tourist will see it. Their experience constitutes a revelation of Śiva's and Mīnākṣi's grace and presence.

The Document in Its Literary Context

Śiva's Sacred Games is a *talapurāṇa* (Skt., *sthalapurāṇa*), literally a "place-history," a traditional or sacred history (*purāṇam*) of a particular place (*talam*; Skt., *sthala*). Though the Tamil word derives from Sanskrit, the place-history as such appears to be more characteristic of Tamil than of Sanskrit literature. Jan Gonda (1962, 2:40) claims that the Tamil place-history is "a unique Tamil expression of Hinduism." While the genre tends to be characteristic of Tamil religious traditions, it should be mentioned that many of the histories of particular Tamil temples appear, either originally or exclusively, in the Sanskrit language.[6] One famous example is the place-history of the Aḷakarkōvil Temple, twelve miles north of the city of Madurai (Radhakrishnan 1942).

Dimmitt and van Buitenen hypothesize that even the great Sanskrit *purāṇas* began as place-histories. They suggest that the Sanskrit texts as they exist now originally were preserved by educated priests who were attached to particular pilgrimage and temple sites, and who used the purāṇic stories "to promote wor-

ship of their own particular deities"(8). Presumably, by this hypothesis, the great Sanskrit *purāṇas* would have become dissociated from the particular locations to which they were originally connected. Of these pan-Indian, Sanskrit *purāṇa* texts, many have been translated into English and Tamil. But, as Vē. Kiruśṇacāmi (3–5) points out, there are basic differences in subject matter between the Tamil place-history and the Sanskrit *purāṇas*. In general, the eighteen major Sanskrit *purāṇas*, termed great histories (*mahāpurāṇas*) and the many minor ones (*upapurāṇas*) deal with the exploits and accomplishments of the primary Hindu deities without associating either the deities or their acts with any single location on earth.[7] However, for the Tamil place-history it is precisely the place, the sacred spot, which constitutes the document's organizing principle. Though the structures of these documents vary considerably, the works usually include accounts of (1) how the spot came into existence, (2) the sacred bathing area associated with this place of worship and pilgrimage, and (3) the unique character of the deity worshipped at that particular spot. In addition, a variety of stories is recounted about the deities of the place, and their interactions there with other deities, wisemen, kings, devotees, and even occasional enemies. Descriptions of the local geography, often in etiological terms, are common. And of course every text must serve to advertise, to sell, the place it extols: why one should worship here, in this place, and what practical results accrue from doing so will be related in the *Nūṟpayaṉ* ("Efficacy of the Book") and in a variety of other introductory sections.

In addition to the Sanskrit *purāṇas* translated into Tamil and the Tamil place-histories, there is a third genre of literature which appears in Tamil under the rubric of *purāṇam*, though it is quite different from these other two. This is the devotional hagiography, composed to praise the miraculous and saintly characteristics of a great person or a great group of persons (see also Zvelebil 1974, 173–77; Kiruśṇacāmi, 3; Shulman 1980, 29–30). By far the most important of these hagiographic works is "The Story of the Sacred Devotees," written by Cēkkiḻār (*Periyapurāṇam* . . . ; and translations by Schomerus; Nallaswami Piḷḷai 1925; 1955). Also known as "The Great Story," this work recounts the lives of the sixty-three Tamil Śaiva saints. Other famous hagiographic works include the life story of the poet Māṇikkavācakar (*Tiruvālavūraraṭikaḷ* . . .) and the life story of the poet *Cēkkilār* (*Cēkkilār* . . .). These hagiographic works are mentioned to distinguish them from the more widespread place-history texts. We should note, however, that the hagiographies often present material appearing in the place-histories, for the glorified saints are usually devotees of the deities praised in these place histories. Thus, both puranic genres draw on the same body of tradition, incorporating these traditions into the specific work in very different ways. Similarly, both the place-histories and the hagiographic *purāṇas* assume a general knowledge of the material presented in the often earlier Sanskrit *purāṇas*. One way to understand the relations these literary works have to each other is to use a conceptual scheme introduced by M. N. Srinivas (1952, 213–17). While he is speaking more about ritual and oral tradition, his

categories prove helpful here. He has divided Hinduism into (a) all-India Hinduism, (b) peninsular Hinduism, (c) regional Hinduism, and (d) local Hinduism. Though distinctions between each level are extremely difficult to specify, it is clear that for him the Sanskrit *purāṇa*s would be the best representatives of "all-India Hinduism." Tamil hagiographies would probably fall between the cracks separating categories (b) and (c), while the place-histories would, depending on their repute, be classified as (b), (c), or (d).

We find in the Tamil tradition, then, three separate genres which are considered *purāṇa*s: they include (1) works translated from the Sanskrit *mahāpurāṇa*s and *upapurāṇa*s, (2) works normally written originally in Tamil as hagiographic accounts, and (3) works written both in Tamil and in Sanskrit devoted to the local traditions and history of a particular place. It is with the third category that I am primarily concerned.

There is no agreement—and perhaps no practical means of ascertaining agreement—about the number of Tamil place-history texts in existence. The longest published list includes 581 titles (Kiruṣṇacāmi), but Kamil Zvelebil has estimated that 2,000 is a more realistic figure (1974, 248). The list, moreover, continues to grow, for these texts continue to be written even today. In his superb work on the Tamil place-history literature, David Shulman has demonstrated how these texts are written, and how the writers undertake the synthetic process of weaving oral tradition into a narrative framework, a framework which depends heavily on the pan-Indian Sanskritic mythologies presented in the Sanskrit *purāṇa*s. It is precisely the vitality of the place-history literature which I find appealing in my study of Tamil religious traditions. *Śiva's Sacred Games* offers an excellent example of how one particular place-history plays a vital role in the lives of devotees today. It is "probably the most famous" of this genre (*DOL*, 248).[8] Significantly, new, summary prose versions of *Śiva's Sacred Games* continue to appear today, almost always in prose form intended for those unable to read the complicated verse originals.[9]

The Several Versions of *Śiva's Sacred Games*

The version of *Śiva's Sacred Games* I use for this study was written by a man named Parañcōti Muṉivar, and probably dates from the middle of the seventeenth century.[10] The hagiographic account of the author's life clearly indicates that divine inspiration was involved in the writing of the document. According to tradition reported by Vēṅkaṭacāmi Nāṭṭār, Parañcōti was born into a royal lineage of Śiva devotees in the Cōḻa kingdom of the Tamil-speaking South. His father was Mīnākṣi Cuntara Tēcikar, who initiated the boy into religious learning by teaching him Tamil, "the northern language" (i.e., Sanskrit), and several "Aryan texts." Parañcōti was a serious religious student, and made pilgrimages to Śiva temples throughout the land. Arriving one day at the great temple of the god and goddess of Madurai, the young man was

struck with a vision. The goddess appeared to him and commanded him to praise in verse the holy games of her Lord. He did as he was commanded, and the result is the text we have today. Its first public presentation was made by Parañcōti as he sat in the sanctuary of Śiva on the Lord's sacred throne of audience. The reception accorded the work by poets, devotees, and scholars was overwhelming (*TVP*, introduction, 12–13).

As the traditional account indicates, Parañcōti's work was divinely inspired. But human inspiration was also involved: several earlier Tamil works referred to the sacred games of Śiva in Madurai. It is more than likely that Parañcōti was acquainted with some of them. The most famous of these literary precedents was the work of Cellinakar Perumparrap Puliyūr Nampi. His work, entitled "The Story of the Sacred Games of the Holy One Who Possesses the Snake" (*Tiruvālavāyuṭaiyar . . .*) is also known as "The Sacred Games Written by the Man from Vēmpattūr" and as "The Old Sacred Games." This last term presumably distinguishes Nampi's work from the more recent Parañcōti version. The earlier text was probably written in the twelfth or thirteenth century. Interested readers may wish to consult my article (1987a) for attempts to trace specific themes from *Śiva's Sacred Games* at least as far back in Tamil literary history as the *Cilappatikāram* of the fifth century C.E.

We turn now, strangely enough, to Greek sources reported in the work of Dessigane, Pattabiramin, and Filliozat (1960). These authors hypothesize a connection between a fourth century B.C.E. oral tradition reported by the Greek envoy to northern India, Megasthenes, and a story about a Pāṇḍya princess who married a deity, a story which constitutes one of the central themes of *Śiva's Sacred Games* for both Parañcōti and Nampi (Dessigane, Pattabiramin, and Filliozat 1960, xii–xiii; Kārāvēlane, 7).

That story, as told by Megasthenes, describes a deity venerated in "Methora." His only female child was given a large army to rule the territory over which she governed, and from which she derived her name, Pandia. Unable to find an appropriate spouse for her, the god himself finally married her. The argument, presented by Dessigane, Pattabiramin, and Filliozat (1960) is intriguing, and several facts do coalesce to make their conclusion plausible:

> . . . the Pāṇṭiya kingdom and its pearl fisheries were known in northern India, where Megasthenes collected his information, from the end of the fourth century B.C.E. And a legend associated with the god of the Sūrasenas of Mathurā had, by then, been localized in the south in the country of the Pāṇṭiyas among whom it has been preserved along with much more recent legend until today, and among whom the capital is Madurai. [xiii, translation mine][11]

If these conclusions are true, significant amounts of the basic plot of the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭarpurāṇam* were current in the oral traditions of northern India by the fourth century B.C.E. Thus, certain elements of the document's plot appear to precede even the earliest known examples of Tamil literature.

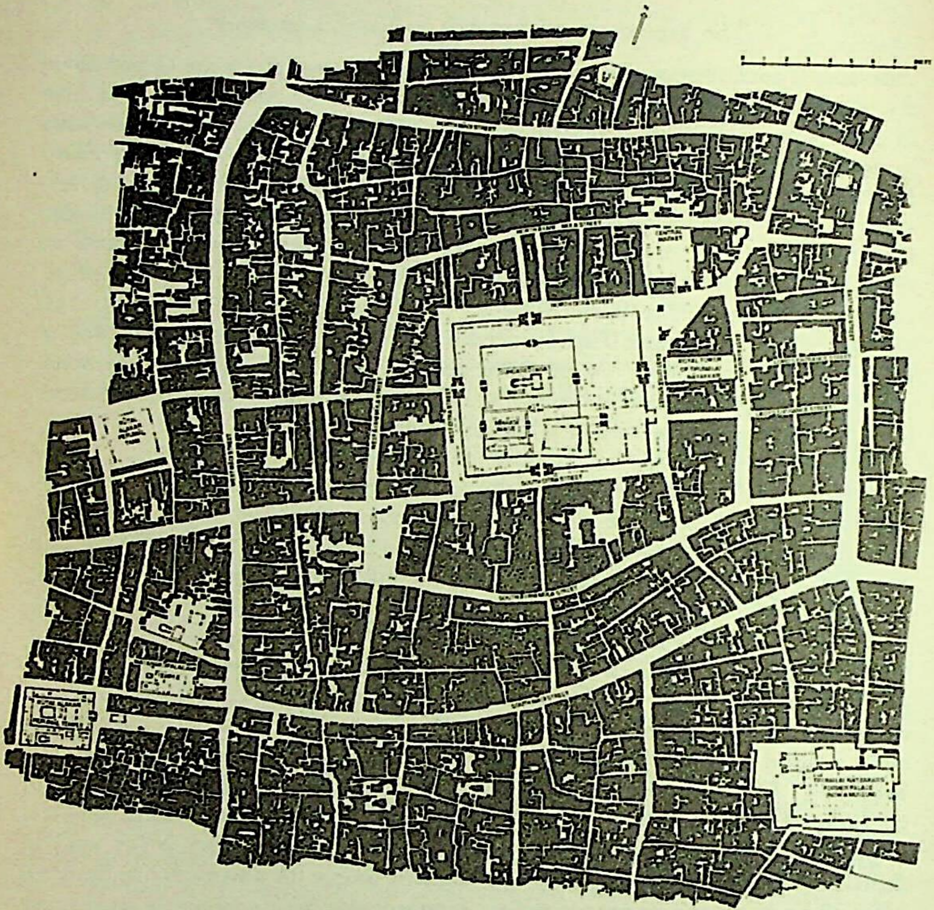
The Precedence of Sanskrit in Tamil Literature

Besides Tamil literary sources, and material reported from the Greek sources, there is another set of materials which recounts the sacred games of Śiva in Madurai. There are at least five purported versions of *Śiva's Sacred Games* in Sanskrit (cf. Harman 1987a). Each purported Sanskrit version of *Śiva's Sacred Games* has been cited as the basis of one of the five different Tamil versions I have located. But there are problems involved in discussing the relationship of the Sanskrit to the Tamil sources. Earlier in this chapter I made an effort to distinguish between the Sanskrit puranic tradition and the Tamil place-history tradition. The basic difficulty textual historians face is that most scholars who have written Tamil place-history works have made every effort to obscure this distinction. To be more precise, they have labored to convince readers (or listeners, as is more often the case) that every Tamil place-history is really a translated section of a Sanskrit work.

Why do they do this to us, and to themselves? The answer is rather straightforward, I fear: even before the early medieval period Sanskrit was considered the language of the gods (hence, the term *devanāgarī*, "belonging to the city of the gods," to describe one of most widespread of the scripts for writing Sanskrit). Given the assumption—some would call it a prejudice—that all divinely inspired literature has its Sanskrit antecedent, many Tamil writers have chosen to attribute their works to earlier Sanskrit originals. To posit a Sanskrit source as the basis of one's work is to place that work in the company of the sacred Sanskrit literary tradition. And it has been suggested that the failure to do this was the reason why much of the earlier classical Tamil literature, written as it was before Sanskrit precedent setting became the rage, has been lost (*TVP*, introduction, 12; van Buitenen 1978a, 6–14; Kārāvēlane, vi; Sirvaraja Piḷḷai, 3). From about the ninth century on, many Tamil scholars began to develop the unfortunate notion that if a literary work is (or was) in Sanskrit, it has to be good. Positing a Sanskrit source for a work not in Sanskrit came to be a writer's insurance policy, guaranteeing his document's acceptance by the "main learned and religious traditions" (van Buitenen 1978a, 12).

An example of the surviving bias is recounted by Vēṅkaṭacāmi Nāṭṭār (*TVP*, introduction, 12): one of his acquaintances had been commissioned to write a life history, in Tamil, of the late nineteenth-century Tamil poet Kumarakuruparacuvāmikaḷ. But the would-be biographer confided that he did not want to start his work of putting the history into Tamil until he had first read carefully the "Sanskrit original"—an original of which he had never heard, and which he had never seen, but which, he was convinced, must exist. The bias is clear: if it is worth doing, it must have been done in Sanskrit first.

I have concluded that the earliest extant work on Śiva's games in Madurai is the work by Nampi. Thus, even if Nampi tells us, as indeed he does, that his work has a Sanskrit antecedent, I am inclined not to believe him. I believe



The Center of the Old City of Madurai with the Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvara Temple in the center of the city's main concentric streets. Adapted from Julian Smith (1976).

that Nampi's is the earliest written version and that it is the basis of all the other versions—Sanskrit or Tamil—available.

Second, it would be difficult to sort out the order of the various intermediate versions—Sanskrit and Tamil—that finally led us to the document of Parañcōti. Still, we find a consistent pattern developing: every Tamil source claims to have a Sanskrit antecedent or model, but no Sanskrit source admits to having a Tamil antecedent or model. This can be explained in one of two ways. Either all major Tamil versions are, in fact, based on one or more of the Sanskrit versions, or they are not. If they are not, the claim that they are could well be due to normal religious and literary protocol whereby the religious legitimacy of a text is constituted by its claim to a Sanskrit antecedent. Similarly, if the author of a Sanskrit text were using a Tamil antecedent or model, by the normal rules of the game he would be well advised not to admit it. Rather, he would be wiser to name as a model another Sanskrit text, or to insert his work judiciously into an already prestigious Sanskrit corpus, such as the *Skandapurāṇa*. Regarding this common practice, see van Buitenen's (1978b) remarks.

While I, and Westerners who are concerned about issues of form criticism, may be dismayed with all this, it is likely that few Tamils would share that sentiment. More important to them is that the texts, as we have them in their various forms, exist at all. For the average lay devotee of Tamilnadu to say that his text has Sanskrit origins probably means something very different for him or her than it does for Indological scholars in the West. We take it to be a statement of chronology, of traceable, verifiable order. Faithful devotees, on the other hand, take it as a testament to origins which are wondrous, mysterious, divine, and *therefore untraceable*. Literally speaking, I am not convinced that the account of Śiva's games in Madurai has ultimate Sanskrit origins, but I would have to agree with the spirit of the claim that it does. I would have to agree that the synthetic process which dates to the early centuries of our era and which, almost miraculously, allows such a work to survive is, at the least, mysterious and wondrous.

For textual critics, then, many problems remain, but they are not problems with which I am primarily concerned here. Rather, what I seek to do in the following pages is to understand how certain issues and themes in Parañcōti's document have been developed. Specifically, I am concerned with how that document reflects a religious apprehension, a mythological understanding, of the cosmos in general and of one place in particular. That place is Madurai.

The Place of the City in the Text

The city of Madurai lies in the south central portion of the modern Indian state of Tamilnadu, formerly called Madras State. Madurai is about 300 miles southwest of the city of Madras (traditionally called Ceṉṉai), the administrative capital of this Tamil-speaking state. Madurai's population was about

550,000 in 1971. This ranked it second only to Madras in terms of population in the state.

The city has an ancient history, and though it would be difficult to substantiate the claim that Madurai is the oldest city in southern India (Kesavan, 220; *EB*, s.v. Madurai), it is clearly one of the oldest. A brief undocumented historical description of the city appears in Leslie Newbigin's autobiography, *Unfinished Agenda*. He writes:

> The city of Madurai is usually regarded as the cultural center of the Tamil country. Its ancient Pandyan dynasty was known to the Greeks and it appears on Ptolemy's map of the world. Numerous discoveries of Roman coins have testified to its commercial links with the Roman Empire and the Pandyan kingdom sent an embassy to the court of Augustus. More important and more ancient is the tradition of the Tamil Sangams—the company of poets and saints who created the classical Tamil literature. Its great temple, one of the most renowned in the whole of India, is dedicated to the goddess Meenakshi who, like Kamatchi of Kanchipuram, was undoubtedly a pre-Aryan mother goddess, but whose co-option into the Aryan religious world is re-enacted in the annual festival for which thousands of pilgrims come to celebrate her marriage with Siva. It has maintained an amazing continuity through more than two millenniums and the Pandyan dynasty which ruled there in the first century before Christ was still ruling when the British raj took over. [98]

References to Madurai can be found in Kauṭilya's fourth-century B.C.E. *Arthaśāstra* (Schwartzberg,16; Nilakanta Sastri 1966, 84). Thereafter the city is mentioned with increasing frequency in inscriptions from the Mauryan empire (321 to 181 B.C.E.), in the *Mahābhārata*, and in Greek sources from the first to the third centuries C.E. (Schwartzberg, 18, 24, 170, and 14–22). Madurai's ancient history, and in particular that before the fifth century C.E., tends to focus on its role as a trade route, a religious center (Schwartzberg, 22, 24, and 178), a seat of Tamil literary activity, and a capital of the Pāṇḍya kingdom (Nilakanta Sastri 1972, 12).

Madurai's Miraculous Beginnings

Parañcōti's version of *Śiva's Sacred Games* frequently alludes to Madurai's sacrality in terms of the site's marvelous ability to provide deities as well as humans with purification and release from their sins (e.g., *TVP* I.1.1–97; I.2.1–29; II.26.1–41; II.47.1–23; II.48.1–25). According to tradition, this is how the site became a city in the first place. In the first of the Sacred Games, "The Chapter in Which Indra's Sin Is Effaced," we find the god Indra in a difficult position. A series of misfortunes has forced him into the unenviable predicament of having to kill a Brahmin. The fact that the Brahmin was an evil demon, an enemy of the gods, and would have killed Indra had the demon not been beaten to the punch, really does not matter. A Brahmin murder is a Brahmin

murder, and so Indra seeks out advice from Bṛhaspati, preceptor of the gods, about how he can be rid of this sin. He is advised to find his purification in the world of humans. When he descends to earth and wanders there, he discovers that passing through a particular area, a forest of cadampa oak trees, brings unexpectedly the sense of purification he has sought. On closer inspection, Indra discovers that the source of his purification is a miraculous Śiva *liṅga* of incomparable beauty, shaded by a clump of cadampa oaks. Beside the beautiful *liṅga* is a golden lily pond in which Indra then bathes and from which he takes golden lilies to decorate the *liṅga*. Indra then pledges to return to this spot every year at full-moon time in the month of Citrā (April-May) to worship in thanksgiving for the purification he has thus received.

In the second sacred game, "The Chapter in Which The Curse on the White Elephant Is Effaced," we have a similar situation. Indra's mount, his glorious white elephant named Airāvata, is cursed by a particularly powerful sage, a *muni* named Turvasa. The elephant, along with Indra, had disregarded Turvasa's gift, a golden lily, when the sage presented it to them on the occasion of their triumphal return from battle to Indra's celestial city. The resentful *muni* curses both: Indra's crown will one day be knocked off his head by a Pāṇḍya king (an event which later occurs in *TVP* I.14.51–53), and Airāvata will become a wild elephant who must wander on earth for 100 years.

After a hundred years of wandering as a wild, black elephant on earth, Airāvata passes through the cadampa oak forest in which the Golden Lily Pond and the Śiva *liṅga* are located. He bathes in the pond and is immediately transformed to his earlier, white, domesticated self. Śiva appears to him out of the *liṅga* and tells him to return to serve as Indra's mount. This he does but only after commemorating the miraculous event by establishing two places of worship for Śiva to which he gives his own name: the Airāvata Bathing Place and the Town of Airāvata.

Before the town of Madurai existed, the spot on which it would later be built had a special claim to sanctity. It had always possessed purifying powers, even before human beings discovered that power. In the third sacred game, "The Chapter in Which the Holy City Is Founded," the first Pāṇḍya king mentioned in the text enters the picture. A merchant informs Kulacēkara Pāṇḍya, king of the town of Maṇavūr, just east of the cadampa oak forest, of the marvelous Śiva *liṅga* which he has seen by chance in the forest. That same night, Śiva appears to the king in a dream and tells him to clear the forest and to build a town there. This the king does, according to strict religious prescriptions, and he then moves his capital there from Maṇavūr.

Sacred Etiologies: Hills, Temples, Rivers, Tanks

With these three episodes, then, the power of the place is established, and an inhabited city, called Madurai, is created. But the document's concern for

etiological explanations does not end here. Throughout the text, we find explanations which will account not just for the city, but for various features in and around the city. And even when the text does not explicitly manifest this concern, devotees do. For example, within the inner shrine of the temple to Śiva today we find not only the *liṅga* which was discovered by Indra. We also find a rather ancient, adumbrated tree stump, fenced off and bearing a sign explaining that this was the original cadampa oak tree which shaded the *liṅga* in the forest (Paḷaniyappaṉ, 172).[12] The Golden Lotus Tank, in which pilgrims bathe today as they enter the temple, was first created by Śiva himself at the request of Nandin and his servants. And it was Śiva who first bathed in it (*TVP* I., "Tīrttavicēṭappaṭalam," 1-14).

The Madurai temple occupies the center of the old fortified city of Madurai—a geographic fact expressing an existential and mythological truth. Many of the temple features and several of the sculptures on its towers and walls are directly associated with specific events in *Śiva's Sacred Games*.[13] But it is also the case that several features of the city and its surrounding terrain are traced to episodes in *Śiva's Sacred Games*. The river running through the city, the Vaigai, is said to have been created by Śiva on the occasion of the feast which followed his marriage to Mīnākṣī. In this eighth episode, "The Chapter in Which the Trench [Filled with] Food and the Vaigai River Are Invited," Śiva creates the Vaigai by asking the Ganges River in his hair to descend in the form of the Vaigai. This is done because one of the wedding guests, a dwarf named Pot Belly, developed a tremendous thirst after eating hundreds of pounds of rice.

Two other temples in the Madurai area also trace their origins to events in *Śiva's Sacred Games*. Though I have never seen it, the Kāñcaṉamalai Temple, named after the mother of Mīnākṣī and the wife of King Malayadhvaja Pāṇḍya, is said to be located just east of the great temple, and beside the bathing tank known as the Seven Seas Bathing Tank (Pañcanatam Piḷḷai 1970, 35). The temple and tank are traced to the ninth Sacred Game, entitled "The Chapter in Which the Seven Seas Are Summoned." In this episode, Kāñcaṉamalai is advised that if she wishes to perform a particularly efficacious religious act, she must bathe in the seven seas. Śiva, her new son-in-law, decides to facilitate the process by bringing together parts of the seven seas into one tank in Madurai. A finer son-in-law there never was.

The Northern Madurai Temple is also traced to a chapter in *Śiva's Sacred Games*: this one, the fifty-sixth, is "The Chapter of the Resolution of the Disagreement with Iṭaikkāṭaṉ." The Northern Madurai Temple, located on Veḷi Street, and to the north of the main temple, is said to be the place where Śiva temporarily took up residence when he abandoned the principal Madurai temple out of disgust for a particular act by King Kuleśa Pāṇḍya. The Lord later returned to the main temple, and this is why the Northern Madurai Temple is also known as the Former/Ancient Śiva Temple.

In addition to temples, rivers, and tanks, the origins of certain hills of the Madurai area are attributed to the acts of Śiva. Today these hills tend to be

among the most striking features of the surrounding countryside, and include the dramatic granite outcroppings known as Elephant Hill, Cow Hill, and Snake Hill.

The twenty-second Sacred Game describes the creation of Elephant Hill and is entitled "The Chapter in Which the Elephant Is Shot with an Arrow." It constitutes a converse to the preceding chapter, in which a stone elephant, sculpted in granite within the temple complex, is transformed into a live, ferocious beast (see chap. 3, subsection "On Correcting Royal Mistakes"). In this chapter a live, ferocious elephant is transformed into a stone hill, a form which does, in fact, resemble a kneeling, wounded elephant when viewed from the direction of the city. Briefly, the story is this:

> Jain priests, incited to enmity by the traditional Pāṇḍya enemy, a Cōḷa king, created a demon in the form of a giant, rutting elephant which they then sent to attack and destroy the city of Madurai. King Vikrama Pāṇḍya prayed to Śiva for assistance as the menacing animal approached Madurai from the east, followed by Cōḷa soldiers and Jain priests. Appearing as a hunter, Śiva shot the elephant with a special arrow. The elephant fell to the ground and died, becoming what we see today: the granite elephant-like form which constitutes the landmark known as "the direction of the elephant." [*TVP* II.22.31]

Similarly, the twenty-eighth episode, "The Chapter in Which the Snake Is Shot with an Arrow," pits the scheming Jains against the Madurai Pāṇḍya King Anantaguṇa. A giant snake, also created from a sacrifice by Jains, and also intent on destroying Madurai, was killed by the king with special assistance from Śiva. Today, the long and sinuous granite image of that serpent lies to the west of the city, precisely where it expired in the form of Snake Hill.

The origin of Cow Hill is also traced to the conquest of Jain malice by Śaiva ingenuity, power, and, in this case, sheer sex appeal. In the twenty-ninth chapter, "The Chapter in Which the Love-Struck Cow Is Tormented," a ferocious cow was sent by Jains to destroy the city. But she literally died of love when Nandin, Śiva's bull vehicle, appeared before her in his most alluring form. Not only was her dead body transformed into a mountain to the southwest of Madurai: Nandin also left his material form there to commemorate the event, a form now known as Bull Hill. Bull Hill is not as well known as Cow Hill, for it lies further west and is difficult to distinguish when a person looks toward the southwest from the city.

The landscape in and around Madurai is thus a sacred geography: prominent mountains, rivers, and bathing tanks are attributed to the gracious acts of Śiva. As Eliade (1971, 57; see also Stanner, 254ff.) writes of Australian religious traditions, so it is with Madurai: ". . . the sacred stories are imprinted in the landscape." Topographical features become the vehicle by which a sacred history is communicated to devotees. These features are reminders of and testimonies to Śiva's involvement in their past and, perhaps more important, in their present experience of the world.

The Names of the City: Madurai, Kūṭal, and Tiruvālavāy

Parañcōti's *Sacred Games* is divided into three volumes, each volume designated by a different term used for the city. The first volume, the Maturaikāṇṭam, takes its name from the most common of the three terms, Madurai. The text traces the name of Madurai to the Sanskrit word *madhura*, meaning "sweetness." At the time the city was founded by King Kulashekhara Pāṇḍya, Śiva poured down on it divine, sweet nectar from his hair, rendering the site pure and sacred, thereby consecrating it (*TVP* I.3.42). A second account of his doing the same thing, this time to repurify the city, occurs in the second volume (*TVP* II.28.1–23). In this second episode, entitled "The Chapter in Which the Snake Is Shot with an Arrow," Śiva kills a giant poisonous snake that threatens the city. As it dies, the snake emits a nasty venom that permeates the city, polluting everything and rendering the place uninhabitable. Śiva takes a few small drops of sweet nectar from the moon which decorates his hair, and drops them onto the city to counteract the poison, thereby purifying the place once more.

One speculative but rather plausible explanation for Madurai's name posits a remote association between the famous Mathura of northern India, where the young, handsome, and playful (Skt., *līla*) god Kṛṣṇa was born and lived, and the Madurai of Tamilnadu, also the residence of a handsome (*cuntarar*) and playful (*tiruviḷaiyāṭal*) Tamil deity (Gros, xxvii; Dessigane, Pattabiramin, and Filliozat 1960, xiv). This hypothesis is reinforced by the fact that Tamil literature speaks often of a "southern Madurai" (*Teṉ Maturai*) in two senses (*T.L.*, 2046). One meaning designates an earlier Madurai in Tamilnadu, to the south of the location of the present Madurai. This earlier Madurai is said to have been the seat of the first of three ancient Tamil Literary Academies, or *Tamil Saṅgams*. Tradition indicates that the earlier Madurai was inundated (T. Naṭarājaṉ, 379; N.Subramanian 1966, 6; *Cilappatikāram* 1973, 8.1 *urai*).

The second meaning of "southern Madurai" indicates the Madurai of today in Tamilnadu as opposed to the one in the north, traditionally associated with Kṛṣṇa. It is in this sense that the *Tiruppāvai* (Filliozat 1972, 5.1) speaks of a "northern Madurai." The *Mahābhārata* indicates an awareness of a "Mathurā" in the north, in what is now Uttar Pradesh and in the south, the present location of Madurai, Tamilnadu. The *Kauṭilya Arthaśastra* indicates an awareness of a "Madhurā" in both the north and the south, and associates both with the production of cotton fabrics, an industry with which the Madurai of Tamilnadu continues today to be associated. Ptolemy's *Geography* mentions the northern "Modoura," while the southern "Madura" is mentioned both in Ptolemy's *Geography* and in *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*. In general, the northern city tends to be mentioned earlier and more often, as, for example, in references to it as the capital of the Sūrasena Mahājanapada between the eighth to the sixth centuries B.C.E. (Schwartzberg, 14–24). It is not unique to Madurai that it be considered one of a north-south geographic pair. The Cauvery River, for ex-

ample, is often referred to in Tamil literature as the southern Ganges. We can see this same process at work in the case of the modern Tamil town of Teṉkāci ("southern Benaras"), about eighty miles southwest of Madurai. It is purported to be the southern equivalent of Benaras.

A final etymological hypothesis is that the city takes its name from the *marutam* trees on the banks of the Vaigai, a river which runs through Madurai. This hypothesis is based on the frequent mention of these trees in the *Maturaikāñci* section of the *Paripāṭal* and on the common transposition of letters in Tamil which the change from *marutam* to *maturam* would require (Cāmpacivaṉ, 17; Gros, xxvii). This etymology seems a bit farfetched to me, but it remains a possibility.

The second volume of *Śiva's Sacred Games* is called the *Kūṭarkāṇṭam*. The name for it comes from the word for "junction" (*kūṭal*), a term often used in literature to designate the city of Madurai (*TL*, 1068). This volume is entirely devoted to the narration of the nineteenth through the forty-eighth of Śiva's games. The first of these sports, the nineteenth, offers an etymological explanation for why Madurai is called Kūṭal. The account, entitled "The Chapter in Which [the City] Becomes the Junction of the Four Towers" (*TVP* II.19.1–26), is a continuation of the eighteenth chapter, in which the deity Varuṇa determines to destroy Madurai. In the nineteenth chapter, Varuṇa arranges for seven clouds to absorb all the water in the seven seas, and to release this water on Madurai, flooding the city. But Śiva intervenes to save the city at the request of the Pāṇḍya king Abhiṣeka. The gracious god summons four large clouds from his hair. The four clouds take their positions on all four sides of Madurai, forming great edifices which protect the city from the imminent deluge. It is from the junction of these four edifices that the city becomes known as the Junction of the Four Towers, or, in shortened form, the Junction. The text reads:

> To divert the torrents sent by the mighty Varuṇa,
> Śiva released from His hair that shines like lightning,
> four clouds, high as mountains,
> which joined together so that
> the ancient town of Madurai became, that day,
> the Junction of the Four Towers.
> [*TVP* II.19.26]

There are several other literary references to Madurai as *Kūṭal*, and some of these precede any known version of *Śiva's Sacred Games*. For example, in the *Akanāṉūṟu*, written around the second century C.E., we find in the praise of a Pāṇḍya king a mention of the town as "*Kūṭal* of endless festivals" (*Akanaṉūṟu*, 116.4; see also *Kalittokai*, 1.31.25). Madurai was, as we shall see shortly, something of a literary center or junction, as well. It was associated closely with the famed Tamil Academy of poets, an academy called the Tamil Saṅgam. Usually, the word *saṅgam* in this context is translated as "academy" but it can also

mean "junction." Most historians agree that this Sanskrit term was originally used by Buddhists and Jains in the south to describe their literary assemblies. It appears late in Tamil literature as a descriptive term for this "junction" or "joining together" of great poets in Madurai (Srinivasa Iyengar, 245–48; Ramachandra Dikshitar, 22). N. Subramaniam (1966, 6–8) argues that the original term for the Madurai Academy was not *Maturai Saṅgam*, but rather *Maturai Kūṭal*. Further, he argues that the city's close association with this institution allowed for the transfer of the term to the city itself. He therefore dismisses the etymology found in the 19th chapter of *Śiva's Sacred Games* as a "legend concocted by religious enthusiasts of a later age" (8).

A final interpretation of the origin of the name has been suggested by Francois Gros (xxvii–xxviii; also Shulman 1980, 70). He believes that the term *Junction of the Four Towers* derives from four early temples for which Madurai was famous. Dravidian architectural style in temples usually dictates that a shrine have at least one large tower over the sanctum or at the gateway leading into it. The four towers would therefore have been associated with the four temples of the city.

The last volume of *Śiva's Sacred Games* is entitled "The Volume of the Sacred Poison-Mouthed [Snake]." The term *ālavāy* (Skt., *Hālāsya*) means "the poison-mouthed one," or more simply, "snake." Madurai is frequently called either Ālavāy or Tiruvālavāy, particularly in Tamil literature. The volume includes the 49th through the 64th sacred games, and closes with a postscript which Parañcōti presents as a 65th episode. The 49th game (and the first in this volume) presents the etymological and etiological account of how the city came to be known as the Sacred Snake. Its title, appropriately enough, is "The Chapter in Which [the City] Becomes the Sacred Snake." The periodic destruction by floods and the ensuing recreation of the universe is typical of the mythology of Tamil place histories (Shulman 1980, 55–69). "Of all Tamil shrines, Madurai can claim the greatest number of flood myths" (69). This particular episode begins with just such a situation: the cosmic dissolution has just occurred. Madurai has been completely destroyed by water except for certain terrestrial and architectural features associated with the sacred games of the eternal Śiva. These include the shrine of the fish-eyed goddess, the arch over the image of Śiva, and, by implication, the *liṅga* (Śiva's aniconic form), the Golden Lotus Tank, Bull Hill, Elephant Hill, Snake Hill, and Boar Hill. As a new world begins, the three southern kingdoms—the Cēra, Cōḷa, and Pāṇḍya[14] are reconstituted with King Vaṃshashekhara Pāṇḍya ruling Madurai. The king sets out to rebuild the old city, the center of which is marked by the shrine of Śiva and the goddess. But he has no way to distinguish the city's ancient and sacredly instituted boundaries. He calls upon Śiva for assistance, and Śiva obliges by ordering the serpent, which is one of his ornaments, to trace out the boundaries. The serpent does so by extending completely around the exterior city limits, forming a perfect square by returning to grasp its tail in its mouth. And so the town is named after this serpent.

Note that Nampi's version of *Śiva's Sacred Games,* entitled "The Sacred Games of the One Who Possesses the Snake," as well as the much later Sanskrit version entitled "The Great Story of the One of the Snake" (*Hālāsyamāhātmya*) emphasize this episode in their titles.

Shulman (1980, 125) theorizes that this etymology may accurately reflect the ancient origins of the association of Madurai with a serpent, and that Śiva's role came later. Specifically, he presents the possibility that before Śiva's explicit association with the snake of Madurai, there may have been a temple dedicated to a snake in that city. The four early temples associated with Madurai were those to the Virgin (*Kaṉṉi*), Viṣṇu (*Kariyamāl*), Kālī (*Kāḷi*), and the Serpent (*Ālavāy*). Given Śiva's frequent association with serpentine symbolism, it would have been a simple matter to identify a temple dedicated to a serpent with Śiva, the hypothetical latecomer of the group of four.

The Tamil Literary Academy of Madurai

There is a widespread tradition in southern India which associates Madurai with the seat of Tamil learning and, in particular, with the ancient Tamil literary academy known as the Tamil Saṅgam. This was the body of poets said to be in the position of judging the worth and acceptability of Tamil literary works. *Śiva's Sacred Games* recounts several elements of this tradition, particularly in its third volume: of the sixteen episodes in that volume, twelve deal with Madurai as the site where great Tamil poets live, write, and receive divine inspiration.

An extraordinary amount of controversy has focused on the issue of the Tamil Saṅgam of Madurai: was there ever such a thing and, if so, how many were there? The controversy, in its basic form, is an expression of the concern for establishing the age of that body of early Tamil poetry termed Saṅgam poetry, which dates from the first century B.C.E. to about the middle of the third century C.E. (N. Subramanian 1966, 1–24; Kailasapathy, 1–10). A secondary concern has been to see this literature in the context of Sanskritic (hence, the Sanskrit term *saṅgha*) culture and literary activity. The story of an ancient literary academy functioning in Madurai does not appear in any of the Saṅgam works. In fact, it does not appear until about the eighth century C.E. when it is mentioned in a commentary on one of the post-Saṅgam works (*Iṟaiyaṉārkaḻ . . .*, commentary on *cutra* 1; Aravamuthan, 111). Briefly, the commentary speaks of three Tamil academies that functioned under Pāṇḍya royal patronage in Madurai. The first was convened in southern Madurai (Teṉmaturai) and lasted 4,440 years. Among the 549 poets involved, says the tradition, were Agastya; the deities Śiva, Murugan, and Kubera; and seven Pāṇḍya kings. When this southern city was flooded by the sea, a second academy, termed the Middle Academy, was convoked in the town of Kapāṭapuram on the east coast. This academy lasted 3,700 years and included fifty-nine poets, among whom were Agastya (again), Tolkāppiyaṉār, and five Pāṇḍya kings. Kapāṭapuram

was also deluged, and the Last Academy was organized in the present Madurai, termed *Uttara Maturai*, or "northern Madurai." This one lasted 1,850 years, and was composed entirely of mortals, including three Pāṇḍya kings.

There have been some strained attempts to demonstrate the accuracy of this chronology, but most historians agree that the works in question were written between the first century B.C.E. and the third century C.E. (Jesudasan and Jesudasan, 8–12; Meenakshisundaram, 17–21; Zvelebil 1974, 10–12). Still, there is a general sense that some sort of literary academy supported by Pāṇḍya patronage probably did exist (Marr, 9; Gros, viii–x; Zvelebil 1974, 10–12). But the extent of its organization remains unknown and probably unknowable.

It is with this long tradition of associating Madurai, the Pāṇḍya kings, and early Tamil literary work that much of the third volume of *Śiva's Sacred Games* is concerned. In fact, one of the first mentions in Tamil literary history of the Madurai Tamil Academy is a reference to an incident later recounted in the 52nd chapter of Parañcōti's version (and in Nampi's, the 16th) in which a young man, aided by Śiva, wins a contest refereed by members of the Madurai Tamil Academy. The seventh-century poet Appar refers to the episode in which Śiva graciously enters the academy in the form of a poet to insure that a poem is accorded its proper honor (*Tēvāram*, Appar, Tirupputtūr Tiruttāṇṭakam, 3).

At least two versions of *Śiva's Sacred Games* (Nampi's and the Sanskrit *Hālāsyamāhātmya*) preserve the tradition of three successive academies, but Parañcōti's version does not, prompting the suggestion that Parañcōti might have been "closer to the *caṅkam* legend than he knew" (Shulman 1980, 73). It is to the role of this academy in Parañcōti's version that I now turn.

The 51st episode, "The Chapter in Which the Academy Seat Is Granted," recounts the origins of this Madurai institution. It begins under the reign of King Vaṃshashekhara Pāṇḍya, at which time, in the town of Benaras in the north, the deities Brahmā and his wife Saraswatī have a disagreement. He curses her to be reborn as forty-eight of the fifty-one Sanskrit letters of the alphabet, and to take the form of forty-eight poets who will create great works with the assistance of the Lord of Madurai, who will himself become the forty-ninth poet.

The forty-eight letters become minstrel poets, versed in Sanskrit, "the other eighteen languages," and southern culture and tradition. When they arrive in Madurai, their talent becomes immediately apparent to the king, who constructs for them a special building to house the academy which they constitute. But local poets are jealous of the instant success these carpetbaggers enjoy, and seek to impugn both their work and their character. The forty-eight resort to Śiva's help, and the Lord gives them a small wooden plank: a seat which has the extraordinary capacity to lengthen in order to accommodate any poet worthy of taking his place in the academy and on the seat. The first three poets to sit on the seat, and for whom it expands each time, are Nakkīraṉ, Kapila, and Paraṇaṉ. The other forty-five follow. Things go well among the forty-eight, but they discover that after some time their compositions are so similar

that they cannot separate their own poetry from that of their colleagues—a possibility which does not seem unlikely to anyone familiar with the strict and elaborate rules regulating uniformity of both style and subject matter in classical Tamil poetry. But Śiva again intervenes, this time taking the form of a poet who is able to make the fine distinctions which even the authors of the poems themselves cannot make. As a result, Śiva is invited to be the forty-ninth member of the academy, and he takes his place on the seat as the head poet.

And so we find that Tamil literature, from its very beginning, has two sources of inspiration. The first is the authority of Sanskrit, incarnate in the forty-eight poets who *are* the Sanskrit language. The second source of authority, and the superior one, is Śiva. He is the source of inspiration and knowledge for these forty-eight poets (letters) (*TVP* III.51.10).

Śiva intervenes at several other points in the development of Tamil literature in Madurai. Mentioned earlier was the case in which he not only gives a young man a poem for presentation to the academy: the gracious Lord appears before the academy in the form of a poet to defend the work which the famous Nakkīraṉ finds unacceptable. Nakkīraṉ's obstinence in the face of divine persuasion earns him the wrath of Śiva: he finally jumps into the Golden Lily Tank to escape Śiva's burning glance, and drowns. But chapter 55, entitled "The Chapter in Which Nakkīraṉ Is Hoisted Ashore," gives us a happy ending: Śiva brings the poet back to life. Nakkīraṉ sees the error of his ways, recognizes the merit of the poem in question, and composes several poems on the greatness of Śiva. Obviously, the poems are based on a direct encounter with the Lord's anger as well as his grace.[15] Nakkīraṉ shares this knowledge with his colleagues, making it possible to eliminate the remaining errors that exist in the Academy's literary practices. Thus, the Tamil language is divinely and finally perfected by the intervention of Śiva.

The language may be perfect, but the poets, even academy poets, are not. They are jealous of each other, as the 55th chapter, "The Chapter in Which Disagreement among Academy Members Is Resolved" reveals. Here, these forty-eight arbiters of acceptable literary work are deadlocked in bickerings about the relative worth of their own poetry. Finally, they appeal to Śiva for assistance. In the form of a poet, Śiva tells them to seek out as final judge the deaf-mute son of the merchant Dhanapati.[16] Indicating which of the works is good or bad by shaking his head upon their recital, the boy miraculously, but finally, determines that the three greatest poets are Nakkīraṉ, Kapila, and Paraṇaṉ.[17]

Śiva's involvement in the Tamil Academy ends with the episode of the 55th chapter. However, his concern for Tamil literary achievement in Madurai continues. In the 56th chapter he takes the side of an accomplished poet named Iṭaikkāṭaṉ when King Kuleśa Pāṇḍya rejects the works of the poet out of jealousy and pride. Similarly, Śiva plays an important role in the life of one of the most famous Tamil bhakti poets Māṇikkavācakkar. Known in *Śiva's Sacred Games* as

"The Devotee from [the Town of] Vātavūr" (*Vātavūraṭikaḷ*), this poet appears in four separate chapters of the third volume. In the 58th, "The Chapter in Which Instruction Is Given to the Devotee from Vātavūr," we find the future poet a respected minister in the court of the Madurai Pāṇḍya kings. But he senses a deficiency in his life until he receives divine illumination from a sage in the town of Peruntuṟai. The sage is really Śiva in disguise, and he gives the Pāṇḍya minister the name Māṇikkavācakkar, thereby bestowing on this powerful royal minister a divine, but secret, identity. In the following chapter, the 59th, "The Chapter in Which Foxes Are Made into Horses," Śiva appears in the form of a horsemaster, changing foxes into horses and presenting them to Māṇikkavācakkar. The king had given Māṇikkavācakkar money to buy horses, but after his religious experience at Peruntuṟai, this royal minister devoted the money to Śiva instead. Returning to Madurai with neither money nor horses, Māṇikkavācakkar must undergo torture at the hands of the king's appointees. Śiva's arrival with horses saves his devotee from royal torture. But the minister's trials are not over. In the 60th Chapter, "In Which Horses Are Made into Foxes and the Vaigai River Is Caused to Rise," Śiva again saves Māṇikkavācakkar from torture when the king discovers the earlier ruse. The entire town is threatened with inundation when the Lord causes the Vaigai to flood, putting an end to his devotee's second round of torture. In the 61st, "The Chapter in Which Dirt Is Carried," Śiva appears to the Pāṇḍya king to explain all that has happened with Māṇikkavācakkar, and the great poet repairs to the town of Tillaipapati, where he writes the *Tiruvācakam*, his most famous work. There he also defeats Buddhists in debate and converts a Cōḷa king from Buddhism to Śaivism by restoring speech and hearing to the king's deaf-mute daughter.

The last poet for whom Śiva provides divine inspiration in the text is Tiruñāṉacampantar, one of the sixty-three canonized Śaiva saints, to whom is attributed a significant portion of the *Tēvāram* (1911). His hagiography appears in the *Periyapurāṇam* (1960). In the 62nd chapter, "The Chapter in Which the Pāṇḍya Fever Is Dispelled," the poet is summoned to Madurai by the queen and one of the royal ministers in order to help combat the growing Jain influence in the city. Even the king, Kūṉ Pāṇḍya, has converted to Jainism. With Śiva's assistance Tiruñāṉacampantar escapes Jain attempts to kill him, and cures the king of a fever when his Jain opponents prove powerless to heal the royal malady. After Kūṉ Pāṇḍya is cured, he converts back to Śaivism, but Jains still control much of the countryside. So, in "The Chapter in Which the Jains Are Impaled," (*TVP* III.63) Śiva instructs Tiruñāṉacampantar to fight the Jains. The competition involves several miraculous demonstrations of the superiority of Tiruñāṉacampantar's poetic talents: a page from his compositions in the *Tirumuṟai* survives fire when Jain literature is burned to ashes; one of his poems written on a palm leaf moves upstream against the current of the Vaigai River, while those of the Jains are carried downstream. Finally, the Jains admit defeat, and those not willing to convert to the winning side must

submit to being impaled alive, as both parties to the competition had earlier agreed. In the end, Śiva appears to bless the great Śaiva poet, and to address him as a son. Tiruñāṉacampantar does not have a leading role in the 64th chapter, but he does make an important cameo appearance by bringing back to life a young man who is mortally bitten by a snake.

We see, then, that *Śiva's Sacred Games* both reflects and transmits the traditions whereby Madurai is regarded as the seat of Tamil culture and learning. Even today, the Tamil dialect characteristic of the Madurai District is regarded as the standard by which good Tamil is judged. And several common aphorisms reaffirm the city's heritage as the arbiter of Tamil linguistic and literary conventions. One has it that, "the way to Madurai is *via* the mouth," and a second declares that "Madurai and Tamil are inseparable" (Perumāl, 103).

Similarly, it might be said that Madurai and *Śiva's Sacred Games* are inseparable. The city's primary Śaiva temple commemorates at least fourteen of the sixty-four sacred sports in dramatic, annual rituals (Cantiracēkara Paṭṭar, 108–12 and below, chap. 4). And, as we have seen, the games of Śiva form the backdrop, geographic and existential, for the stage on which Madurai devotees live their daily lives. In the pages that follow, I attempt to put in relief some of the basic motifs of *Śiva's Sacred Games*. The most important of them, I shall argue, serve as models for Tamil devotion in that city. In particular, the episodes surrounding the sacred marriage of Śiva with Mīnākṣī are crucial.

III.

The Founding Marriage

The Goddess Weds Śiva in the Text

Śiva's Sacred Games attests to the holiness of the city of Madurai. The site's sanctity depends neither on minor gods nor on people. Śiva's presence there in the form of the miraculous *liṅga* suffices. Indra's accidental, but fortuitous purification at the sacred spot did not determine or even change the site's value. It simply reaffirmed the power of the place, as did the arch he constructed over the shrine.

Similarly, the experience of the merchant Dhanañjaya did little to alter the character of the site: as he passed through the cadamba oak forest, on the way home from a business trip, Dhanañjaya witnessed the form of Śiva and the honors given him daily by minor deities and celestials. The enthralled merchant immediately informed his king, Kulashekhara Pāṇḍya, who ruled over the town of Maṇavūr, to the east of the oak forest. Śiva then appeared to the king in a dream, instructing him to build a city on the sacred site, and to move his capital there. In a sense, the king's response did change the nature of the site. Śiva, existing there in the form of Sundareśvara, became for the first time the deity of a city: no longer would he be a little-known sacred presence in the midst of an uninhabited forest. But the greater change, both for the sacred site and for the kingdom whose new orientation the site provided, was yet to come. Kulashekhara Pāṇḍya may have founded the city which was to become the locus of Śiva's purifying power. He literally placed his kingdom in its presence and at its disposal. But the more careful work of laying the ground for a long-term personal relationship with this deity fell to his son and successor, King Malayadhvaja Pāṇḍya, and to that king's wife.

The Birth and Reign of the Goddess/Queen Mīnākṣī

Malayadhvaja Pāṇḍya never intended to be put in such a position, but circumstances were clearly beyond his control. The king and his wife were childless, and, because their religious devotion and good works did not seem sufficient to change this sad state of affairs, they began offering a series of horse sacrifices. These, they hoped, would please the deities and bring them a son. Unfortunately, horse sacrifices are not always conducive to the births of sons, and so the elaborate rituals continued until they reached the point of bestowing on their sponsor extraordinary powers, but still no children. At this junc-

ture the deity Indra intervened. He realized that if any king successfully celebrated 100 horse sacrifices, that king would rightfully be able to claim Indra's own throne. After the ninety-ninth horse sacrifice, Indra appeared and announced to the king that if he wanted a son, he should perform "the sacrifice which brings forth a son" rather than perform any further horse sacrifices (*TVP* I.4.). The king did, but the results were not as expected: instead of a son, the sacrifice produced a three-year-old daughter.[1] And to make matters worse, she was something of a freak, for she had three breasts (*TVP* I.4,19,20). The king complains, then, quite understandably:

> I was without a son, and I performed great sacrifices [*tavam*] for long periods of time.
> [And when that failed] I performed the sacrifice that was supposed to produce a son,
> And from that sacrifice I got a daughter.
> But God! Even though this girl has come with a face that shines like the moon,
> She has three breasts! Such an appearance makes even enemies laugh.
> So he thought, plunged in depression and unhappiness.
> [*TVP* I.4.24]

The king's lament does not go unheeded, however. A celestial voice, that of Śiva's, responds:

> O King! Treat your daughter as though she were a son:
> Perform for her all the rites as specified in the Vedas.
> Giver her the name, "Taṭātakai." Crown her queen.
> And when this woman, whose form is golden, meets her Lord, one of her breasts will disappear.
> Therefore, put your mind at ease.
> In this way, Śiva graciously appeared in the form of words spoken from the sky.
> (*TVP* I.4.25)

The king did as he was told, training his daughter as though she were the legitimate male heir to the throne. Once she is crowned (I.4.35), the king figures no more in the text: shortly after the coronation he dies (I.4.41).

It is only by the end of the 4th chapter, entitled "The Chapter of the Sacred Incarnation of the Lady Taṭātakai" that we come to realize to what extent the apparent folly of kings, and of mortal males in general, can be transformed into the wisdom of women. The king's widow, Kāñcaṉamālai, goes into the temple to worship, but not to worship Śiva, strangely enough. Rather, she worships "The Mother" (*Aṉṉai*), glossed by the commentator as "Mīnākṣi" (*TVP* I.4.80). There it is revealed to the queen's mother that it is due primarily to *her* virtue (*kaṟpu*) as the king's wife that Śiva's consort Parvatī was born miraculously in the form of Taṭātakai/Mīnākṣi.[2] While Śiva remains in ultimate control, Mīnākṣi's reign comes to represent what is really the case: penultimate powers rest with the women. Royal sacrifices, the domain of men, are

not really responsible for what has occurred. Indeed, none of the 100 sacrifices ever produced the desired result. The fate of the Pāṇḍya kingdom lies in the hands of women, a fact made even clearer in "The Chapter of the Sacred Marriage," to which we now turn.

The Marriage of Mīnākṣī and Śiva

Having isolated the theme of marriage as basic to the text of *Śiva's Sacred Games*, I have thereby indicated how crucial I believe marriage to be in this document. Let me be more specific at this point. In this text marriage is one of the primary means by which Śiva plays a soteriological role in the lives of his devotees. He marries a representative of the royal dynasty, thus guaranteeing his own permanent alliance with his in-laws (something, as we shall see, he does twice in the text: initially marrying the daughter of a Pāṇḍya king and later marrying the daughter of the king of a tribe of fishermen). Also, he frequently makes possible the marriage alliances of his devotees in order to redeem them from possible or imminent danger. In this chapter my concern will be primarily with Śiva's marriage to Mīnākṣī. In chapter five, I will discuss details of Śiva's other marriages and his interventions in the marriage arrangements of devotees.

Other authors have remarked upon the crucial theme of marriage in Tamil literary works: George Hart (1975, 223), for example, concludes that "for the ancient Tamils, the central manifestation of the sacred in life was marriage." David Shulman's wide-ranging study of Tamil *talapurāṇa* myths notes that in the majority of these texts marriage is the "central structural element" (1980, 138).[3] In *Śiva's Sacred Games* a simple glance through the table of contents gives some indication of the primacy the document reserves for the actual marriage of Śiva and Mīnākṣī. Of Śiva's sixty-four sacred games, the marriage is only one, the fifth in the series. But while the average number of verses for each of the chapters is forty-seven, "The Chapter of the Sacred Marriage" contains 199 verses. The marriage chapter is by far the longest, with only two other chapters exceeding 100 verses (the 52nd has 107 verses, and the 59th has 127 verses). Because the marriage chapter is so important, I present below a brief summary of it. Interested readers may wish to consult my appended translation of the entire chapter.

The Queen: Her Conquests and Marriage

The fifth chapter opens with Mīnākṣī as Pāṇḍya monarch: her rule is just and beneficent, but she rules as an unmarried queen, a situation which, the commentator notes (I.5.1, 2), is not proper for an Indian monarch. Her mother laments her unmarried state (4), but Mīnākṣī assures her that there are better things to do now, such as conquer the world (5).

The female monarch then prepares her impressive array of soldiers for their assault on the guardian deities of the eight directions (6ff.). She herself leads the cavalry, followed by horse-drawn chariots, rutting elephants, and decidedly vicious hand-to-hand combatants. Significantly, the three southern kingdoms (Pāṇḍya, Cēra, and Cōḷa) are portrayed as united under the Pāṇḍya queen's command as, together, they set out to conquer the rest of the universe (verse 18).

The attacking army is so impressive that its first scheduled combat with Indra, king of the gods, never occurs: he flees at the sight of the troops (23), and his white elephant and wish-granting tree are taken as booty. In fact, the same occurs with the other seven guardians of the directions: the troops march directly to the abode of Śiva, Mount Kailāsa, where they encounter their first real resistance.

Mount Kailāsa is first beseiged. Then a genuine battle between Mīnākṣī's forces and the demigod (*bhūtagaṇa*) armies commanded by Nandin, Śiva's bull vehicle, ensues (27–31). Blood and gore abound on the battlefield (32–38), and the Pāṇḍya queen appears particularly savage in the fray. Nandin's forces are completely routed; he has no choice but to appeal to Śiva for help. With appropriate fanfare, Śiva graciously appears to survey the carnage (42). Then the miracle occurs:

> The moment She saw him Her [third] breast disappeared.
> She became bashful, passive, and fearful.
> She leaned unsteadily, like the flowering branch of a tree under the weight of its blossoms.
> Her heavy dark hair fell on Her neck.
> She looked downward, toward Her feet, with collyriumed eyes that were like *kenṭai* fish.
> And there She stood, shining like lightning, scratching in the earth with Her toes.
> [43]

Mīnākṣī's minister Sumati then points out that the ancient prophecy made at her birth has been fulfilled: Śiva as he stands before her now will be her husband. Śiva instructs her to return to Madurai where he will marry her.

Love-struck and loaded with plunder from her victories, Mīnākṣī arrives in Madurai. The city is elaborately decorated and townspeople are ecstatic over the news of her coming marriage. They drink, dance, sing, shout, and throw off their clothes in an orgy of drunken celebrative abandon (47–57). The extensive wedding preparations include assembling the bride's garments, preparing foods, and sending out wedding invitations (58–78). The list of wedding guests is impressive.

Śiva advances toward Madurai in his wedding party with Viṣṇu on his right and Brahmā on his left. The surging throngs are so heavy that the dust raised underfoot darkens the skies and hides the sun. Śiva's arrival in the city is accompanied by praises of the town, the bridegroom, the bride, and, especially,

of the buxom women of the city, who go mad with lust when they see this handsome god (113–40).

> Wearing the crescent moon,
> He arrived on his fierce, red-eyed bull.
> All the women, joyous, feasted on the sight of Him
> as though their eyes were lips
> drinking from an ocean of joyous nectar.
> Unaware that their new clothes were falling to the ground,
> that their bangles and jewelry were slipping away,
> or that their sense of discretion was leaving them,
> they were submerged in a flood of lust.
> [138]

With a bit more decorum, the Brahmins also honor Śiva, as do the auspicious married women and other wedding guests (142–52). Ceremonial baths, additional descriptions of the voluptuous bride, and further digressions on the physical virtues of Madurai women precede the entrance into the marriage hall of the bridal pair (158–70). As the ceremonies proper commence, the gravity of the occasion induces unity among the incredible variety of deities and demons present. This is emphasized by the initiatory ceremonial act of Viṣṇu, a deity with whom Śiva, in much of the mythology, has not always been on the best of terms (see below, chap. 4). Viṣṇu washes Śiva's feet (176), an act usually performed by the father of the bride (Gupta, 72; Srinivas 1942, 72; Dubois, 223; Beck 1964, 141). The deities, *gaṇas*, sages, and other devotees then purify themselves by drinking the foot-washing water (177) as Viṣṇu gives the bride to Śiva. This act of giving away the bride elicits widespread rapture among the guests.

Other ceremonies follow: Śiva blesses and partakes of the sweet drinking mixture. Brahmā feeds the sacrificial fire with clarified butter. Śiva ties the wedding necklace on his bride, pours parched grain into the fire, places the bride's foot on the grinding stone, and points out to her the pole star, which symbolizes steadfastness.

With the ceremony accomplished, women sing as Śiva leads his bride into the marriage chamber (189).

Clearly, the wedding has been a blessing, but possibly more so for humans than for deities: those mortals who witnessed the event have become divine (190–91). As the guests prepare to leave, Śiva bestows on them elaborate gifts and instructs all the kings present on the subject of just kingship. Then, this great god Śiva, who rules all the worlds, who is supreme among the thousands of deities, takes his place on the throne of the Tamil Pāṇḍya kingdom of southern India in the town of Madurai. And in so doing he willingly, graciously, assumes the limits and the transformations this incarnation will require (194). By virtue of this act of grace, Madurai attains greatness, and Śiva obtains a kingdom (199).

How Marriage Changes Mīnākṣī and Śiva

In the document, the marriage constitutes a significant transformation, not just for the people of the city but for the Pāṇḍya dynasty as a whole; it also transforms Śiva and Mīnākṣī. Her transformation is dramatic, for it begins with the loss of her third breast when she first lays eyes on her husband-to-be. This event, according to the instructions the celestial voice gave Mīnākṣī's father on the day of her birth from the sacrifice, allows her to recognize her Lord and master. But there are several other possible interpretations worth considering. The commentator of our text, Vēṅkaṭacāmi Nāṭṭār (1:357), says that the disappearance of the third breast is indicative of a change from male to female. Up to the moment she met Śiva, Mīnākṣī's father had treated her as his male heir: training her as a man would be trained in the sciences and martial arts. She ruled powerfully over Madurai and conquered all the regions of the world. In short, she acted like a man. But, as the text indicates, when she sees Śiva she changes radically. This fierce warrior who one moment is disemboweling her victims and smearing her spear with their blood and fat, whom none of Śiva's demons can defeat, becomes, in a trice, "bashful, passive, and fearful." Like a shy adolescent she scratches in the dust with her toes, unable to meet Śiva's eyes.

Philip Spratt (268) would probably agree with Vēṅkaṭacāmi Nāṭṭār's interpretation: he regards the third breast in Indian mythology as a phallic symbol. Using this interpretive structure we can regard Mīnākṣī's transformation as the loss of her masculinity: with two breasts she is now a proper woman rather than one with a penis. Now she can marry Śiva. However, David Shulman (1980, 209–11) has suggested that the change in Mīnākṣī is not from male to female, but from androgynous figure to female (see also O'Flaherty 1976, 342–43). Given the importance in Śaiva thought of the role of divine androgyny, his suggestion makes good sense. Mīnākṣī was, in some sense, the perfect ruler even before she met Śiva. Though not properly married, at least in her person she embodied the male/female complementarity crucial to the administration of an ordered cosmos and kingdom.[4]

In her transformation from a violent, aggressive, unmarried state to a passive, submissive, married state, Mīnākṣī recalls a widespread phenomenon among goddesses in much of India, and documented explicitly by Lawrence Babb in his study of village religion in Madhya Pradesh. There the unmarried goddess (called Durgā, Mahāmāyā, or Kālī) is a bloodthirsty killer: vicious and dangerous. But when the goddess is featured as Śiva's bride she is transformed into "a benevolent goddess . . . , an exemplar of passive devotion to her husband, and . . . dutifully subordinate" (141).

Mīnākṣī is not the only one who changes, however. While her transformations occur when the fact of the wedding becomes inevitable, Śiva's transformations occur at the actual ceremony. There, he becomes the Pāṇḍya son-in-law and king. Normally, in his pan-Indian mythological tradition, Śiva

is associated with his mount (the bull Nandin), snakes which encircle his body, the crescent moon usually represented iconographically in his hair, the tiger skin clothing of the ascetic and the Indian laburnum plant. But all this changes at the wedding when Śiva becomes the locally incarnate Sundareśvara of Madurai. Specifically Śaiva elements are replaced with Pāṇḍya royal symbols. His insignia changes from the bull to the fish: the Pāṇḍya king was known as "He of the fish" (*Mīnavaṉ*), and so Śiva assumes both the fish banner and that title (*TL* 3216). Similarly, Śiva is transformed from "He who is crowned with laburnum flowers" (*Koṉṟaicūṭi*), which is one of his all-India epithets, to "He who wears the garland of margosa flowers" (*Vēmpaṉ*), an epithet of the Pāṇḍya kings (*TL* 1168, 3835). And the ascetic paraphernalia of the unmarried Śiva change to the royal garb of a married monarch: snakes become golden ornaments, the crescent moon becomes a jeweled crown, and the tiger skin becomes costly garments (cf. O'Flaherty 1973, 238–50).

In this way, Śiva's encounter and marriage with Mīnākṣi propels him from the solitary, uninvolved, and dispassionate preoccupations of the ascetic life into the world of royal responsibility for administering a kingdom. The change he undergoes resembles that of the classical Hindu "everyman." Marriage marks the beginning of a new life for every male Hindu as he gives up the chaste ascetic life of the student (*brahmachārin*) to assume the responsibilities of the householder (*gārhasthya*). Only as a householder can a man repay the traditional debts he has to the gods (the unmarried man may not perform sacrifices), to the ancestors (the student must remain celibate and so has no children), and to society (the householder is active in the mundane commerce of this world). (See also chap. 5, subsection entitled "Marriage in the Lives of Men.")

Śiva, then, in becoming Sundareśvara of Madurai, follows or, theologically speaking, establishes the norms for the role every Hindu male assumes at marriage. And the hypergamy-hypogamy model is here reaffirmed. Mīnākṣi "marries up": as the Pāṇḍya daughter she weds a deity, that is, a superior. Śiva "marries down": he graciously condescends to marry into the mortal Pāṇḍya line.

Significantly, *Śiva's Sacred Games* indicates that Śiva was unaware of the battle Mīnākṣi and her warriors were waging with Nandin's forces when the Madurai queen attacked Mount Kailās. Śiva had to be interrupted, and summoned, to the battlefield (I.5.40). The ascetic Lord, then, is summoned into the world where he marries, becomes a responsible monarch, and has a son. He allies himself with a woman, a kingdom, a city, and a people. This god who, in the Sanskrit tradition, "has neither father nor mother . . . has no *gotra* ["lineage"], family, or name" (*Śiva* 2.27.43 and 2.48.18–20), becomes, in the Tamil tradition, the son-in-law of the Pāṇḍyas. He assumes a wife, a father, a new name, and a kingdom full of devotees. And, as Mīnākṣi herself proclaims, he has saved the Pāṇḍya royal line from extinction (*TVP* I.10.31).

All this the marriage does, but it does still more. The covenant which the marriage constitutes remains in force today from the point of view of devotees.

This is true even though, strictly speaking, there are no longer Pāṇḍya monarchs: the dynasty lost most of its power in the fourteenth century and ended by the beginning of the seventeenth century. Mīnākṣī and her husband Śiva still reign from within their palace-temple in the city. The alliance that once was between Śiva and a royal dynasty has now become the alliance between a deity and the devotees of the goddess he marries. Thus, if there are no longer Pāṇḍya monarchs, there is no longer the need for them. Like the Hebrew patriarchs through whom Yahweh worked, and without whom he continued to work, the Pāṇḍyas were instruments, mediators. Now, though the middlemen are gone, the commerce continues. It could easily have been Śiva proclaiming:

> I will make a new covenant with them . . . . It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand . . . . Although they broke my covenant, I was patient with them . . . . But there is a new covenant I will make . . . . I will set my law within them and write it on their hearts. I will become their God and they shall become my people. [Jeremiah 31.31–34]

The covenant, which is the marriage alliance, is written on the hearts of the people of Madurai in two ways. First, it is recelebrated, and therefore reaffirmed, every year in a remarkably large and festive ten-day occasion. With that celebration I shall deal in chapter five. Second, the covenant is renewed every time devotees read, hear, or remember the episodes which follow the marriage in *Śiva's Sacred Games*. In particular, those episodes which occur in generation after generation of Pāṇḍya rulers remind devotees of Śiva's and Mīnākṣī's gracious vigilance over the kingdom.

Implications of the Marriage : A Royal-Divine Alliance

The marriage of Śiva with Mīnākṣī is an elaborate, ritualized statement that an alliance is being forged. That alliance is between Śiva and the cosmic powers he commands on one hand and the royal monarch of the city of Madurai, and the people and territory under her control, on the other. The ceremony is a public declaration—to mortals, divinities, and demons alike—that Śiva has entered into an alliance with the Madurai Pāṇḍyas. He becomes, and is explicitly declared, a "son-in-law" (*marukaṉ*) of King Malayadhvaja Pāṇḍya (I.5.122; I.5.150; I.8.4). He assumes the role of king of the Pāṇḍya domain. And, just as the sonless father of a girl given in marriage has the right to claim her first son as an heir (Pandey, 193; *TVP* II.39.3, where the sonless Dhanapati takes his daughter's son as a legitimate heir) so the son of Śiva and Mīnākṣī, Ugra, becomes the legitimate heir to the Pāṇḍya throne (I.12.66).

As the Pāṇḍya line continues, it becomes clear that Śiva has taken seriously the responsibilities incumbent on the good son-in-law. He is eternally present

in the Madurai temple, where he and his wife Mīnākṣī have retired. And he can be called upon for assistance in time of need. At times, Śiva must help ward off threats posed to the kingdom by other deities (e.g., I.13.1–20; I.14.1–59; I.15.1–45; I.18.1–19; II.19.1–17). On other occasions, he is called upon to repel threats posed by malicious Jains (II.22.1–42; II.28.1–23; II.29.1–38; III.63.1–82) or unfriendly Cōḷa kings (II.35.1–37; II.37.1–22; III.50.1–44). Often, the day-to-day complications of ruling justly are more than mortals can handle. Again, Śiva is there to help: he reproduces the stolen crown jewels, without which no new successor can be properly crowned (I.17.1–93). He resolves a murder mystery so that King Kulottuṅga Pāṇḍya does not end up punishing an innocent man (II.25.1–44). He saves Rājasekhara Pāṇḍya from despair and a certain suicide (II.24.1–29). When the royal treasury is depleted, he replenishes it (II.31.1–19). When King Varaguṇa Pāṇḍya inadvertently kills a Brahmin, thus becoming unable to rule by virtue of this great sin, Śiva is there to show him how to efface the results of his heinous act (II.40.1–65). And when Vaṃshashekhara Pāṇḍya is unable to rebuild Madurai after the cosmic dissolution, Śiva comes forward to help him trace out the boundaries of the ancient city (III.49.1–28).

On Correcting Royal Mistakes

Still, Śiva is not a Pāṇḍya chauvinist. There are times when Madurai monarchs need correction or outright chastisement. Like the parent whose responsibility it is to provide loving discipline, he corrects royal aberrations. In "The Chapter of the Resolution of the Disagreement with Iṭaikkāṭaṉ," Śiva uses his ultimate weapon to express disapproval of King Kuleśa Pāṇḍya: he leaves the Madurai temple and sets up his divine residence outside the city on the south bank of the Vaigai River. It seems the king's poetic prowess had been threatened. The enviable poetics of Iṭaikkāṭaṉ, though in eloquent praise of the king, were met with outright royal jealousy and, therefore, disapproval. Only when the king gives the poet the honor he deserves is Śiva willing to return to Madurai (III.56.1–38). In another instance of misguided jealousy, King Rājarāja Pāṇḍya shows his weakness for women by indulging one of his favorite concubines, a singer. The concubine develops such a jealousy for the wife of Pāṇapattiraṉ, a devoted singer of hymns to Śiva, that she convinces the king to "rig" a singing contest that will put the devoted woman to shame. Śiva, however, intervenes to give his devotee the victory, and to denounce the king's actions (II.44.1–44). Nor does Śiva hesitate to steal from the Pāṇḍya coffers when he feels a musician and his artistic development are being neglected by a penny-pinching monarch (II.42.1–30).

One of the ways Śiva guides the Pāṇḍyas, then, is to provide them with a sense of perspective. Should they fail to recognize artistic greatness, or should they become overly impressed with their own authority, he is ready and will-

ing to remedy matters. When, for instance, King Abhiṣeka Pāṇḍya fails to accord the proper respect to a mild-mannered, wonder-working holy man (who is really Śiva in disguise), the Lord nearly scares the king to death. He causes a stone elephant statue in the temple to come to life and to attack the king. Śiva's intervention precludes a disaster and opens the king's eyes to his own folly (I.21.1–29). Or, in one of the more famous of the episodes, the great Tamil poet Māṇikkavācakar finds himself at odds with King Arimardana Pāṇḍya. In this cat-and-mouse game between the poet and his king, we are able to recognize Śiva's presence at nearly every turning point. He encourages Māṇikkavācakar to more and more audacious acts of faith-inspired defiance, while he foils the mundane plans of an overly practical king who fails to see Śiva's presence because he is so caught up in day-to-day arrangements (III.58.1 to III.61.88). These episodes involve 380 verses, and include the second and third longest chapters in the document. Briefly, the story line is this: as chief Pāṇḍya minister Māṇikkavācakar is sent by the king to purchase horses in the town of Tirupperunturai. There he has a moving encounter with Śiva, and consecrates to his Lord the money given him by the king for the purpose of buying horses. Meanwhile, he stalls the king via vague messages about the horse-buying negotiations. At Śiva's command, he finally returns to Madurai empty-handed. He successfully stalls a few days more, but finally is forced to undergo a series of tortures and imprisonments: the king wants his horses or his money. Śiva finally appears to Māṇikkavācakar in prison to preview the next days' events: the Lord will turn foxes into horses and himself appear as the cavalry master to lead the horses into the city with impressive pomp. So it happens, and the chastened king releases his minister, bestowing on him many gifts as recompense for the "unjust" torture. But that night the horses turn back into foxes, wreaking havoc in the town. The king again arrests and tortures Māṇikkavācakar, who prays to Śiva once more. This time, the Lord floods the city with high waters from the Vaigai River, and Māṇikkavācakar's torturers flee for their lives. Now the king turns his attention to saving the town: he gives each resident responsibility for shoring up a dike on specified sections of the flooding Vaigai River. An old woman named Vanti, who has no relatives, is unable to do her assigned work, but she finally hires a ne'er-do-well (who is really Śiva in disguise) to do the labor in return for payment in rice-flour cakes. The worker eats first and proceeds to frolic at the dike site, singing, dancing, throwing mud at his fellow workers, and, in general, making a nuisance of himself. Finally, the king comes to inspect the work. When he learns about the loafer hired by Vanti, and sees that all the work is finished except Vanti's, he goes into a rage. He clubs Śiva on the back, a blow which, simultaneously, is felt by the king, all people in the kingdom, all animals, stars, trees, plants, and gods. Vanti is summoned to explain it all, for the worker has disappeared. But she is taken to heaven by a celestial chariot, right before the king's eyes, and the king is left standing there to wonder what, on earth and in heaven, is going on. Finally, in the form of a heavenly voice, Śiva ex-

plains what has been happening, from the initial attempt to purchase horses up to the incident with Vanti. Once more, Śiva makes his point: devout monomania in the service of God is preferable to meticulous administrative diligence in the service of kings.

And, once more, it is clear that Śiva has been directing the affairs of the Pāṇḍya kingdom. While he may not always act as certain kings would like, the fact that he is present and is acting constitutes assurance that the welfare of the kingdom is in good hands.

Kingdom = King + Land + People

The benefits of the Pāṇḍya alliance with Śiva are not limited to royalty alone. In India, a leader or king is directly responsible for the welfare of the people in his realm. If it does not rain, for example, the king is to blame, or if the people fail to live righteously, it is because the king himself is deficient (Gonda 1966, 2 and 7). There is an intimate relationship between the king, the land he rules, and the people. This relationship is "often characterized by the use of familial symbolism" (Inden 1978, 30). Thus, the king is regarded as a father, the earth as the king's wife and mother (Hart 1975, 63), and the people as their children (*Mahāb.* 12.64.29). It would follow that any alliance made with a king implies an alliance with the people who live in his kingdom. This, at least, seems to be the case in *Śiva's Sacred Games*. Śiva is not concerned solely with the intricacies of royal politics. As we have seen, he intervenes to champion the causes of some of his humblest devotees. And this he does in the face of occasional royal opposition.

Śiva and His In-Laws/Devotees

Some of the more colorful incidents in the story involve no kings at all. Śiva is willing to intervene in the lives of lowly individuals solely because they live in or have journeyed to the Pāṇḍya kingdom of Madurai.

A few examples should illustrate. "The Chapter in Which Alchemy Is Performed" depicts the plight of a faithful Madurai woman named Poṉṉaṉaiyāḷ, which means "the Golden Woman" (II.36.1–30). Her greatest desire in life is to commission, and finance, the making of a golden statue of her Lord Śiva. But the money she makes by singing and dancing in a nearby Madurai temple is hardly sufficient for the charitable works she performs. Each day she feeds hundreds of devotees, and the expenses are so heavy that her wish continues to be postponed. Śiva comes to her house disguised as a wonder-working holy man (*cittar*). On being questioned, she tells the holy man what she wants in life, and expresses regret that until now she has been able to afford only a wax statue of her Lord. He tells her:

"You have comprehended the proper goal
of this life and the next.
Just as your name suggests,
may you be granted your desire
to make from gold the holy form
of the eternal Lord.
Lying inside your house are many utensils
of brass and lead.
Get them, and bring them to me," he said to her.
[II.36.22]

This she does. The holy man rubs them with ashes and tells her to put them into the fire that evening. When she does, they turn into gold and she makes the image she always desired.

Aside from granting heartfelt wishes, Śiva is deeply concerned about righting the injustices his Madurai "relatives" suffer. I have shown above how Śiva deals with injustices suffered at the hands of various Pāṇḍya kings. But there are other important instances: "The Chapter in Which a Body Is Cut to Pieces," for example (II.27.1–28). Here, an elderly swordmaster, devoted to Śiva, suffers great indignation from one of his former students named Siddha. The young upstart woos his former teacher's students away, instituting his own school of swordsmanship. As if this were not enough, Siddha tries to seduce his former teacher's wife. She prays to Śiva for help, and the Lord takes the form of her husband, the elderly swordmaster. He challenges Siddha to a public duel in Madurai, an opportunity the young man has been seeking. Śiva, of course, dispatches the brash youngster in five quick, surgical maneuvers:

Saying again and again, "Protect, if you can,
the heart that desired his teacher's wife,
the tongue that spoke to her improperly,
the hand that grabbed her, and
the eyes that looked on her with lust,"
He sectioned away each time as He spoke
the various body parts.
And having so punished him,
He then cut off his head
which fell to the ground
as the holy form of Śiva disappeared.
[II.27.19]

Siddha's story might well be interpreted as a veiled Oedipal episode: he lusted after his teacher's wife and wanted to kill his teacher. But we need not look far in the story for an unveiled episode. Here, again, Śiva intervenes, but hardly in the way we might expect given the punishment he reserved for Siddha. The events are narrated in the 26th chapter, "The Chapter in Which a Heinous Crime Is Effaced." A young Brahmin boy who lived with his parents in the

town of Avanti was committing incest with his mother. One day, his father discovered the two *in flagrante delicto*. The boy, fearful and angry, killed his father and, with his mother, fled. However, the two were accosted by thieves in the forest: he was beaten and robbed and she was kidnapped. The boy was haunted by the ghost of his father no matter where he went. Finally, stumbling into Madurai, he came across none other than Śiva and Mīnākṣī, who were sitting at the door of the temple disguised as a hunter and huntress. When the hunter asked the obviously distraught young Brahmin what his problem was, the boy broke into tears and confessed what he had done. Śiva was moved by the confession, and said:

> Come! Who can efface the sin you committed knowingly,
> a sin which would cause to fall into hell
> even the relatives of those who mention your name?
> But because I have looked [graciously] upon you,
> I will tell you how to remove this sin easily.
> Begging your food, eat only once a day.
> Serve those who are devotees of Śiva.
> You must rise before the red-rayed god
> touches the sky.
> Gather fresh, cool, sweet aṟuka grass
> and feed cattle with it.
> With loving devotion you must ritually bathe
> outside the temple three times a day
> in the water used to bathe the divine image.
> Then you must worship Śiva by circling around Him 108 times,
> while lying flat on the ground and rolling.
> [II.26.31–32]

The formula works, and in three months the young Brahmin rids himself of the haunting specter which is his dead father. He becomes an exemplary Brahmin, and lives righteously ever after. This episode, near its end, suggests certain elements of the story of the prodigal son in the Christian tradition (Luke 15.11–32), particularly when Mīnākṣī inquires of her husband why he would be so kind to someone who had committed such an awful crime. Śiva, like the forgiving father whose generosity in the parable is challenged by the faithful elder son, declares that the greatest grace is to save someone who might have perished if left to fend for himself (II.26.35).

We can see that *Śiva's Sacred Games* is a document which expresses particular concern with the relationship between Śiva and his human "in-laws," that is, the Pāṇḍya royalty and the people who fall under Pāṇḍya jurisdiction in the Madurai kingdom. The point could be further illustrated by at least twelve other episodes (chapters 7, 9, 10, 23, 30, 31, 32, 39, 42, 43, 52, and 53), but I do not believe it is necessary, at least not to make my point. It would be less than honest, though, to exclude mention of those chapters which might be taken

as counterinstances to my argument. In particular, I am speaking of chapters 34, 45, 47, and 48. With these I will now deal.

These four chapters demonstrate that Śiva's grace is not bound by the categories I have outlined so far. That is, in these chapters Śiva's concern goes beyond the boundaries of the Pāṇḍya kingdom and of the human devotees in that kingdom. "The Chapter in Which the Signet of the Bull Is Affixed" is a good example (II.34.1–30).

In much of this story as, in fact, tended to be the case between the eighth and thirteenth centuries, the Pāṇḍya and Cōḷa kingdoms had alternately hostile, then friendly, relations (Schwartzberg, 31–32; Nilakanta Sastri 1972, 88–137). Hostility is clearly the state of affairs in chapter 34, when Kāntārachedaka Cōḷa and Kulabhūṣaṇa Pāṇḍya ruled. The Cōḷa king was a devoted worshipper of Śiva, and often read about the Lord's exploits in Madurai. He had a fervent desire to worship Śiva and Mīnākṣī there, but could not go because political relations between the two kingdoms did not allow it.

In the form of a wise man Śiva appears to the Cōḷa king in a dream and tells him to go to Madurai in disguise, alone, and at night. This the king does, and after a difficult journey in which Śiva again appears as a wise man to act as a guide, drying up the flooding Vaigai River to permit a crossing, the Cōḷa king finally gets his wish. He leaves the town before morning, and Śiva seals the exit gate to the town with the signet of his mount, the bull Nandin. The next morning, the night watchmen of the city are astounded by the bull signet:

> Rushing to the other three gates of the city,
> they inspected the victorious fish signets they themselves
> had deposed there the day before.
> Wondering who could have done this,
> they went before the king.
> [II.34.21]

The incident worries the Pāṇḍya king until Śiva graciously appears to him in a dream and explains the whole affair. The replacement of the fish signet, a Pāṇḍya royal symbol, with the bull signet, Śiva's pan-Indian symbol, is a noteworthy event. It is a reversal of what occurs when Śiva marries Mīṉākṣī (I.5.194). And it demonstrates the ultimate authority claimed by the Lord of Madurai over what occurs in the Pāṇḍya kingdom. More important than royal politics are devotional yearnings, even if they are the yearnings of foes of the Pāṇḍya dynasty. While Śiva is bound to the Madurai kings, he is not bound by them or by their quarrels. The fact remains, however: Śiva guards the city. He will admit to it all who acknowledge his sovereignty, and who will humble themselves in order to confess that sovereignty.

This chapter sets the stage for its sequel, "The Chapter in Which a Water Pavilion Is Established": the Cōḷa king's religious experience in Madurai leads him to attempt a reconciliation with the next Madurai king, Rājarāja Pāṇḍya.

The attempt, however, breaks down, and war between the two kingdoms recommences (II.35.1–37).

Śiva and the Animals of the Kingdom

Besides Pāṇḍya kings, Madurai residents, and other selected devotees, Śiva demonstrates an abiding concern for animals, in whose lives he also graciously intervenes. In the Indian tradition the good Indian king is a mediator in two ways. First, he mediates between the supernatural sphere of the gods and the human sphere: we have already seen how the Pāṇḍya kings do this. Second; the king is a mediator between nature and society: if he is a good king, all life, including vegetation and animals, will prosper (Gonda 1966, 6 and 24ff.). In this sense, Śiva's alliance with the Pāṇḍya kings would imply his concern for animals in the kingdom. Further, in the pan-Indian Sanskrit tradition, Śiva is known to be "Lord of animals" (*Pāśupati*): his role in this story of working on behalf of the welfare of animals makes exceedingly good sense.

Probably the most famous of the episodes in which he demonstrates his care for animal life is "The Chapter in Which the Piglets Are Breastfed" (II.45.1–63). The story begins in a small town just south of Madurai in which twelve children, recently orphaned, lived. They had never been well behaved, but did stick together. One day, they chose to amuse themselves by taunting an old ascetic recluse named Bṛhaspati. The recluse cursed them to be reborn in the future as pigs who would be orphaned; but he softened the curse by assurances that they would have the Lord of Madurai as a mother.

King Rājarāja Pāṇḍya went hunting one day in the forests where these boys had been reborn as children of the king and queen of wild boars. The royal party ended up killing the mother and father of the twelve piglets, though not without a valiant battle in the process. Śiva took pity on the twelve starving piglets, and assuming the form of their deceased mother, fed them from his (her?) own breasts. The divine breast milk provided them with supernatural energy and intelligence. They developed human bodies, but retained their boar heads. Here, Śiva's care for those in the kingdom extends even to animals. And it is clear that the incident occurs within the boundaries of the Pāṇḍya domain: to hunt in another king's territory is tantamount to the declaration of war. While Śiva often helps female devotees (e.g., Vanti in chapter 61; Poṉṉaṉaiyaḷ, 36; Gauri, 23; the unnamed wife of Pāṇapattiraṉ, 44; the unnamed wife of the swordmaster, 27; Kāñcaṉamālai, 9, 15), this is the only occasion in the story when he takes on a female form. In the final verse of the chapter, Śiva is praised as both male and female, mother and father:

> He became a mother in this world, in our lifetime.
> He transformed dumb animals into intelligent beings,
> and improved even births to come in their future.

> No matter what world, what lifetime,
> even for all forms of life:
> that One Who Protects as mother and father:
> If it is not He, who, then, is it?
> [II.45.63]

This verse is something of a transition to the next chapter, for in it the twelve human-bodied, boar-headed beings serve as the head ministers of the Pāṇḍya king. They have become the most intelligent among the intelligentsia of the kingdom.

There are two other occasions when Śiva bestows his grace on animals. They are narrated in "The Chapter in Which Instruction Is Given to the Crow" (II.47.1–23) and in the following "Chapter in Which Final Release Is Granted to the Stork" (II.48.1–25). In each case, the bird comes to Madurai seeking the favor of Śiva. After performing a prescribed set of ritual devotions, each bird wins final beatitude and, in addition, a boon for all the other birds of his species. The crow wins great strength among birds. The stork is assured that hereafter all aquatic life in the Golden Lily Tank will be banned. This way, none of his species will be tempted to sin by eating fish, and therefore destroying life, in such a sacred spot. In both cases, Śiva's grace, as it emanates from the Madurai temple, is affirmed. All terrestrial and winged beasts, by implication, are declared eligible for the benefits. They need only come, temporarily, to the Pāṇḍya kingdom and city in which the temple of the Pāṇḍya Lord is located. There, they will receive what they want:

> Without love for the feet of the Lord,
> Dispirited and aimlessly wandering was this crow.
> With love for the feet of the Lord,
> he became the most powerful [among birds].
> None is more wretched than he
> who is without love for the feet of the Lord.
> And none is stronger than he
> who cherishes the feet of the Lord.
> [II.47.23]

In any cost-benefit analysis of the merger between Śiva and the ongoing Pāṇḍya enterprise, it seems clear that the marriage was a very wise investment for the Pāṇḍyas. Śiva's constant care and protection turn out to be invaluable. True, Śiva sometimes fails to lend his unquestioning support to the policies and decisions of particular kings. His action, at times, even subverts certain of the short-range goals of the Pāṇḍya kings. But in long-range terms, his championing the side of his "in-laws" against jealous deities, ambitious Cōḷa kings, malicious Jains, and the pitfalls which fate so capriciously scatters in the paths of mortals, insures the righteous survival of the kingdom. His covenant with the

Pāṇḍyas guarantees prosperity in the land, or, if not always prosperity, at least the assurance that events are under his control.

Motifs of the Madurai Marriage and the Pan-Indian Sanskrit Tradition

It is obvious to anyone familiar with the pan-Indian mythic and epic traditions that *Śiva's Sacred Games* and the more widely known Sanskrit texts draw upon many of the same mythological strands. In the 5th chapter for example, the transformation of Śiva's ascetic garb into costly clothes and jewelry at the time of his marriage parallels in several particulars the similar transformation Śiva undergoes in his marriage to Himavat's daughter as it is described in the *Śiva Purāṇa* (cf. *Śiva* III.39.38–42 and *TVP* I.5.194). The excitement of the women in the town when Śiva enters as an alluring bridegroom can be found in similar detail in *Śiva's Sacred Games* (I.5.138–40), the *Vāmana Purāṇa* (27.21–25), and the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* (4.39.12–21). And while *Śiva's Sacred Games* is unique in its description of a woman who succeeds her father on the throne as a powerful monarch, the birth of Mīnākṣī from a sacrifice and her later marriage with a deity has its antecedent parallels in the *Agni Purāṇa* (verses 9–12) in which King Janaka's daughter is born miraculously from a furrow in the earth and later marries a deity and in the birth of Kālavatī, daughter of a king: according to the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* (IV.107–31) the girl, like Mīnākṣī, was born out of a sacrifice and later married a deity, Narāyaṇa. Even more similar is the account of how King Vaiśvata Manu, though wanting a son, received a daughter from his "son-producing" sacrifice (*Bhāg.* 9.1.13–32).

There are, of course, many local incidents unique to the Madurai tradition, incidents which involve Śiva as well as Mīnākṣī, and with which I have been able to find no parallels in the pan-Indian texts. Śiva's appearances in the forms of a jewel seller (I.17.1–93), a swordmaster (II.27.1–2), a seller of bangles (II.32.1–36), a witness in a trial (II.39.1–37), a seller of firewood (II.41.1–70), a mother pig (II.45.1–63), a member of the Academy of Tamil Poets (III.51.1–39), and an earth carrier (III.61.1–114) are just a few.

It would be a longer and more arduous task than I care to undertake to trace the unique features of this text in the context of other Sanskrit or Tamil sources. What I would like to do, however, is to discuss some of the unique features of the marriage event that appear in *Śiva's Sacred Games* when we compare this document with others in which Śiva's marriage receives much attention, such as the *Śiva Purāṇa.*

One of the more significant differences is that in the Madurai marriage, Mīnākṣī's father does not participate. Shortly after Mīnākṣī accedes to the throne and long before her wedding, her father dies (I.4.41). This is most unusual in an account of marriage which, for many, is the ideal, the model for what should occur. For one thing, it denies Mīnākṣī's father the opportunity to perform one of the most meritorious acts any man may perform: that of

presenting "the gift of a virgin," (*kanyādāna*), that is, of giving his daughter in marriage to a deserving groom (Gupta, 55; Fruzetti; *Śiva* III.31.1–29). Further, the husband's predeceasing his wife constitutes a very inauspicious event (Harper 1969, 91; Hart 1975, 118). Why would *Śiva's Sacred Games* report—rather than, at the least, ignore—such an ill-timed happening? Both major versions (Nampi's and Parañcōti's) mention it, but it is significant, I think, that while the earlier Nampi version reports the death at the beginning of the wedding chapter (*Tiruvālavāyuṭaiyar* . . . 4.2), Parañcōti, sensing its inauspicious nature, places it near the end of the chapter preceding the wedding. There are two intriguing and, I would suggest, contributing reasons why the death was not eliminated altogether. The first has been suggested by the work of David Shulman (1976, 120–47; 1980, 201–5). In his analysis of various folk traditions regarding the Pāṇḍya queen and goddess Mīnākṣi, he shows that Mīnākṣi is herself associated with the violent deaths of both her husband and her father, both of whom are Pāṇḍya kings. Shulman's analysis arrives at the conclusion that "however we may interpret the insertion of a local goddess into the royal lineage of Madurai, the result in the folk tradition is that Mīnākṣi murders her father, not her husband" (1976, 141). For those familiar with the local folk traditions of Madurai, the premature death of Mīnākṣi's father and her succeeding him would ring quite true even though *Śiva's Sacred Games* is far too respectable a document to sustain explicitly the tradition that she killed him. In a finer and more literate milieu, that possibility simply is unacceptable and certainly not very respectable. Mīnākṣi's father's early death in the text allows for that folk tradition to maintain its force.

The second reason it is convenient for Mīnākṣi's father to die before the wedding is that it allows for the traditional Tamil ritual whereby the brother of the bride, rather than the father, gives the bride away in marriage. As we shall see, people of Madurai regard Viṣṇu as Mīnākṣi's brother. According to customs of Dravidian marriage ceremonies, frequently the bride's brother, not her father, presents her as a gift. And this is precisely what occurs in the text's description of the ceremony (I.5.178).

Another difference between the Sanskrit materials and *Śiva's Sacred Games* concerns the portrayal of Śiva in the marriage arrangements. The Sanskrit sources, even the professedly Śaiva ones, do not present Śiva as all sweetness and light. When he deals with Himavat and Menā, the parents of Pārvatī, he is mercurial and insolent in the *Śiva Purāṇa* (III.30.1–39; III.31.42ff.; III.43.63–65; III.44.48–50). He is like a child who, though forced to go through with the silly conventions of an adult (or human) world, acts out his objections every step of the way. He offends Menā with lewd dancing. He scares Himavat by his ghastly appearance in the wedding procession. He refuses to recite his lineage at the ceremony, and he nearly kills Brahmā, the presiding priest, during a temper tantrum.

The Madurai marriage is a very different matter. Here, from the moment Mīnākṣi meets her lord, Śiva is, quite literally, the personification of sweetness

(*Maturanātar*) and light (*Parañcōti*). He is charming, beneficent, gracious, and generous. The text does not ignore Śiva's other aspects, though. Later on, he does appear as a vindictive swordsman, a filthy wood vendor, or a lazy, mud-slinging coolie. But at the marriage he is decidedly one-dimensional. He is all a groom should be, and more. His single surviving parent-in-law, Kāñcaṉamalai, has no reason to doubt this alliance before or after the marriage. In fact, after the marriage, Śiva saves her from the dreadful fate of continuing to live as a widow. He summons Malayadhvaja, her deceased husband, back from the world of the dead to take her with him to their eternal resting place. By Śiva's grace the two ascend together in a celestial chariot to Śiva's heaven (I.10.1–35). In general, *Śiva's Sacred Games* tends to portray Śiva in a more favorable light. He is unquestionably *Cuntarēcuvarar,* "the Beautiful Lord." If he does appear in shabby or vicious form from time to time, we are assured that this is only an appearance, a game, a sporting thing to do. Śiva is not *really* like that.[5]

Śiva's Sacred Games thus combines elements of local tradition with those of the Sanskrit *Purāṇas*, and often it does so in a creative, synthetic way. For example, in the scenes preparatory to Śiva's appearance to Mīnākṣi at Mount Kailāsa, the Sanskrit elements of the goddess as the violent, unmarried female who will wed whoever defeats her in battle are clearly apparent (*Vāmana* 20.34; O'Flaherty 1980, 80–86; Brubaker, 95–97; Shulman 1976, 120–22). These elements, however, do not appear in the Sanskrit materials in association with the marriage of Śiva. The formal weddings of Śiva with Pāvatī or of Śiva with Satī are never preceded by the bride's facing him in the context of battle. The closest Pārvatī comes to anything like this is by winning Śiva through her intense devotion or her religious austerities (*Śiva* III.23.1–31; *Vāmana* 25.25–28 and 25.56–59; *Liṅga* I.102.1–63; *Brahma* 4.38.2–22 and 4.37.28–40). It is true that Śiva is always reluctant to marry, but only in the Tamil material is there a hint that he marries because the woman defeats him. Just as the hint that Mīnākṣi kills her father is not respectable enough to be preserved in any explicit way in *Śiva's Sacred Games*, neither is there an explicit battle between Śiva and Mīnākṣi. Nevertheless it is implied: Mīnākṣi does defeat the regents of the eight directions, one of whom is Īcāṉaṉ, a form of Śiva (I.4.25). And she certainly fights viciously with Śiva's forces, which are commanded by Nandin. But when she meets Śiva, it is all over (I.5.21–45). In him, the alluring and the menacing meet. Elsewhere in the text, any hint that there might have been a confrontation such as the one recounted in the 29th episode, where Nandin the bull confronts, seduces, and then defeats a giant cow, is consistently glossed over. We find, for example, in the introductory "Praise Section" to the work, the following lines:

> She appeared as the holy Daughter of a Pāṇḍya king,
> learned all the sciences,
> and assumed the royal crown,

with responsibility for ruling the kingdom.
She conquered the entire world,
defeating Nandin and his servant forces in battle.
She placed on that Lord Whom all worship
a beautiful, fragrant wedding garland
and Her crown.
She graciously gave Him Her crown,
and prospered from the wealth so gained.
All this She did, this Woman-king
whose lotuslike feet are worthy to be placed
on the heads of us all.
[*TVP* I.*Kaṭavuḷ Vāḷttu*, 11]

But the ultimate localization of the pan-Indian tradition of Śiva's marriage is not so much in the Tamil textual transformations of the Sanskrit tradition. What brings it to a place, a locale, in a vivid, unforgettable way is its reenactment and celebration. For the residents of and pilgrims to Madurai, it is the wedding's annual ritual celebration that proves most memorable and in the literal sense most local. To a description and an analysis of that annual event I now turn.

IV.
The Primacy of the Goddess
Madurai's Annual Marriage Festival

Marriage is a pivotal theme in several place-histories of Tamil temples. Similarly, several Tamil temples celebrate annual festivals to reenact the marriages of gods and goddesses.[1] The most widely known is the Marriage Festival of the city of Madurai. There, in the temple known as the Mīnākṣi-Sundareśvara Temple, it is generally common knowledge that "witnessing the Wedding Festival is the greatest event a pilgrim may experience at this shrine" (Cāṣtirikaḷ, 7, translation mine; also see Cāmpacivaṉ, 93; Centil Turavi, 197 and 215; Pañcanatam Piḷḷai 1970, 75). Indeed, in the city which Tamil Hindus regard as the City of Festivals, by virtue of its frequent and elaborate religious celebrations, there is no dispute that the Madurai Wedding Festival is *the* big occasion (Pañcanatam Piḷḷai 1962, ii; Cāmpacivaṉ, 93; Meena, 30). Little wonder, then, that the author of a book entitled *Five Great Festivals* would claim that it is a uniquely Tamil quality to associate all weddings with the wedding of the goddess of Madurai (Centil Turavi, 197). Another perspective on the event, one written in 1937 by a British colonial official, claims that "this is the biggest festival in the Presidency . . . . Nearly two million people congregate for the festival, and the police forces of nearly half a dozen districts will serve to look to law and order then" (Radhakrishnan 1937, 9). In this chapter, I describe the Madurai Wedding Festival. It is known widely as the Citrā Festival because it occurs annually in the month of Citrā, the month which often straddles the last weeks of April and the first weeks of May in the Western calendar. Commonly, however, people prefer to speak of it as the Wedding of the Goddess.

The Primacy of the Goddess

That Mīnākṣi is generally regarded as the more important of the two deities in the temple would come as no surprise to those who know the city firsthand. It is, however, a fact that would not be obvious to someone who reads *Śiva's Sacred Games*. The text clearly indicates that Mīnākṣi is subordinate to Śiva: it is he in the story who defeats her, dominates her, and bestows his grace on her by marrying her. In fact, he condescends to marry her twice in the text (I.5.87ff. and III.57.60–64). But in terms of actual ritual treatment in the temple, and in terms of the way the vast majority of devotees talk about this divine married pair, Mīnākṣi takes clear precedence. N. Subramanian calls attention to

this striking contrast between the mythology and the ritual and concludes that Mīnākṣi was a local Dravidian goddess, originally unrelated to the northern, male, Sanskritic import Śiva. He believes that the redactors of *Śiva's Sacred Games* tried, unsuccessfully, to subordinate her to Śiva by means of marrying her to him (Subramanian 1974, 214–17). Looking at it from another point of view, Jan Gonda believes that Mīnākṣi's marriage to Śiva was simply a way to incorporate a powerful, locally important Dravidian goddess into the Brahmin Śaiva pantheon (Gonda 1962, 29; also Diehl, 177, note 4).

However the process of syncretism may have occurred, we do know today that among Tamilians Mīnākṣi, despite her representation in *Śiva's Sacred Games*, is the dominant figure in the pair. Indeed, the marriage of the Madurai divine couple is regarded as the classic instance in the south of the female-dominated marriage, an arrangement referred to as "a Madurai marriage" (S. B. Daniel, 71ff.). In casual discussions, the question, Is yours a Madurai or a Citamparam household? is taken to mean, Who rules in your house, the wife or the husband? (Perumāl, 103). The male-dominated marriage is called the Citamparam Marriage, referring to Śiva's uncontested dominance, ritual and mythic, in the famous Śaiva temple of Citamparam.

Temple guidebooks are explicit about Mīnākṣi's ritual precedence (Pañcanatam Piḷḷai 1970, 55 and 149; Paḻaniyappaṉ, 147; Cāmpacivaṉ, 85; *Know Madurai*, 10; Meena, 3; Rajagopalan, 5). She is always to be worshipped first. Although the imposing Eastern Gate stands directly before Śiva's shrine, pilgrims are instructed to, and almost always do, enter through the Hall of the Eight Goddesses which leads into the goddess's shrine. Tradition has sought in some cases to explain this by reasons other than the straightforward assertion that the goddess is the dominant one in the pair. One version claims that pilgrims should enter by way of Mīnākṣi's shrine because of Indra's initial experience when he found the image of Śiva in the cadamba oak forest. It was at the gate of Śiva's shrine that the sin which afflicted Indra left him. Thus, by this clever interpretation, the gate before Śiva's shrine is termed the leaving doorway (*viṭṭa vācal*): one must enter via the Mīnākṣi shrine and leave via the Śiva shrine (Centil Turavi, 204). Another tradition says that entry through the main Eastern Gateway is inauspicious because a temple servant committed suicide by jumping off it to protest "palace misdeeds" (Jeyechandran 1974, 374).

Even *Śiva's Sacred Games* is self-conscious about the apparent contradiction. In the earliest episodes, Śiva is clearly the preexistent, sacred presence at the spot which later becomes Madurai. But in the fifth episode, Mīnākṣi, the queen of the city, does not encounter Śiva until she marches with her warriors to Mount Kailāsa to meet him in battle. As soon as she sees him, it is clear that he is her Lord. She becomes submissive rather than bellicose, and listens demurely to his instructions that he will soon marry her:

> "From the moment you started out
> intending to triumph over the eight directions,

From that moment we and our forces also left Madurai,
accompanying you all the way here.
On the coming Monday I will marry you at the auspicious hour,
and as prescribed in the Four Vedas.
Go, then, back to your city!" he said.
[I.5.45]

Though we have here an explanation of how Śiva can both be at Madurai before Mīnākṣi's departure and yet meet her at Mount Kailāsa, there is still some ambiguity in the text as to whose city it really is.

But there is no such ambiguity in terms of ritual practice in the temple. The temple is, primarily, the abode of the goddess Mīnākṣi and only secondarily that of Śiva. Shulman (1980, 139) notes the common repetition of this pattern in other Tamil place-history texts: the god is "drawn to the site by the goddess and . . . rooted there by marriage to her." This fact is underlined by the practice in the Mīnākṣi Temple of offering each of the four daily worship (*pūjā*) ceremonies to the goddess first (Pañcanatam Piḷḷai 1962, 18). Of the twelve major temple festivals, four are celebrated in exclusive honor of Mīnākṣi, but none are celebrated in exclusive honor of Śiva. The remaining eight are celebrated in honor of the divine couple together (Fuller 1980).

Mīnākṣi's ritual dominance over the city is dramatically represented in two of the Wedding Festival's ritual processions. The first, on the eighth day of the Festival, immediately follows her coronation. The exclusive attention which she receives as the city's newly crowned monarch is suggestive of, indeed an enactment of, the traditional procession made by the Hindu monarch after his coronation. The processional path around the four concentric Māci Streets is significant. These streets once formed the outer limits of the ancient city. Her procession thereby marks off the outer boundaries of her domain. She is the newly crowned monarch of the territory her path circumscribes.

On the following day the goddess again is taken alone in procession around the four Māci Streets in her ritual conquest of the deities of the eight directions. In so doing, she is securing the geographic space which has been claimed as her own. As each of her conquests is made, Śiva does not accompany her. He must be encountered from outside the city, from his abode at Mount Kailāsa, and brought into the city by her from the city's northeasterly limit.

What becomes clear as a person witnesses the Wedding Festival of Madurai in light of the faith of the vast majority of devotees is that the marriage of Mīnākṣi is the occasion for the celebration. But much more than a marriage is being celebrated. The festival brings together deities and mortals, rural and urban, Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava in order to celebrate the goddess as royal monarch and the city as sacred center. During this ritual celebration the usual norms are suspended. Normally, deities do not travel among mortals, moving through the streets, appearing to them in the context of mundane activities. Usually, the deities remain in their temples, and those wishing to worship them must visit them in the purity of their sacred precincts.

Normally, the rural peasant does not travel to the city to worship there. His deities live where he lives, and it is on their powers that he usually depends for his protection and livelihood.

Normally, Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas do not worship together. Historically, theirs has been an ambivalent relationship involving sustained hostilities, rare violence, and occasional rapprochement (Murdoch, 132–34; Gonda 1970, 5–13, 88, 91, 94).

The yearly Citrā Wedding Festival is not a normal time: distinctions usually made are obliterated as is the profane time to which these distinctions belong. In Madurai, "once a year the old time, the past, the remembrances of all events not archetypal in character . . . are abolished" (Eliade 1963, 402). When Mīnākṣī marries Śiva, the female in this pair assumes the predominant role, despite the androcentric emphasis we find both in typical Hindu social norms and in the text to which people refer when they explain the marriage. Clearly, the relationship between this sacred marriage as it is described in the text and the sacred marriage as it is enacted annually is more complicated than we might expect.

Myth, Ritual, and Festivity: Initial Considerations

As we look at the rituals of the wedding festival, and as we discuss with the religious communities involved what those rituals mean, we do not necessarily learn any more about the text. What we might discover is how the text is perceived in light of the rituals. We are likely also to discover how the various communities use the text, or how they fail to use it, in their religious life. In this sense, a study of the rituals can provide a new perspective on the text without necessarily teaching us more about the text per se.

Still, we know that the Citrā Festival as it is celebrated today is clearly associated with the text. The annual calendar of Citrā Festival ritual events published by the temple begins with several quotations excerpted from *Śiva's Sacred Games* and with several references to events which the text narrates. Popular authors seeking to explain the import of the festival for the faithful have isolated specific festival events as dramatic enactments of stories narrated in *Śiva's Sacred Games*. Events mentioned most often included Mīnākṣī's coronation as queen of the city, her conquest of the world, and her marriage with Śiva (Cantiracēkara Paṭṭar, 107–8; Centil Turavi, 198; Pañcanatam Piḷḷai 1970, 77). We have, in other words, an observable series of rituals, and we have an associated text, a mythology. But we cannot assume that the myth and the ritual have a simple one-to-one relationship, that, as Leach insists, "myth regarded as a statement in words 'says' the same thing as ritual regarded as a statement in action" (13; see also Coomaraswamy, 10; Stern, 9; Gaster 1954, 187). Mythology is rarely, if ever, to be considered simply a libretto for the ritual drama.

I regard mythology (stories about deities) and the ritual commonly associated with it as separate phenomena. Each has its own integrity apart from the other. Eliade's preference for regarding myth and ritual as "different structures or levels of sacred manifestation" (Penner 1965, 50) and Tambiah's (1970, 301) choice to regard "myth and its associated ritual initially as two separate phenomena, each with its own logical structure and message content," are points of departure more in keeping with my own predilections. It would follow for me that neither myth nor ritual can be considered primary *in principle*. There are instances in which the existence of a mythology does give rise to the commemoration of that mythology in certain ritual acts. One pertinent example is the ritual reenactment of ten successive stories from *Śiva's Sacred Games* during the Madurai Temple's Āvaṇimūla Festival (Cantiracēkara Paṭṭar, 9–10). Aside from the straightforward claims of temple officials that these rituals are later than the mythology, it strains normal credibility to insist that the rituals came first, that, for example, the ritual enactment of Śiva's carrying mud in exchange for rice cakes during a flood of the Vaigai River, or the ritual enactment of his bestowing beatitude on a repentant heron, preceded the stories of these events.

But there are also instances in which particular ritual acts give rise to an explanation of these ritual acts in the form of a mythology. The formation of what later in this chapter I call "the lay myth" to describe the Wedding Festival events is just such a case.

Even when the historical antecedent can be traced, when we can say with any certainty that either the myth or the ritual came first, it is not at all clear that such historical observations make any difference to the participant in a ritual event. A person may participate in a ritual event; indeed many do, without knowing the mythology with which the ritual is associated. And s/he may find that ritual just as meaningful as someone who claims to know the mythology which the ritual involves. Ritual, once enacted, has a life of its own. It does not always or necessarily remain dependent on the intentions which brought it into being.

While I choose to see myth and its associated ritual in separate perspectives, I certainly cannot deny that they are frequently associated with each other. There are at least two reasons for this. First, compelling mythologies tend to be concretized, to be commemorated in stirring verse, in architectural forms (see Wu and P.Wheatley), and in commemorative or celebrative acts, that is, in rituals. In these forms, the mythologies assume a more durative quality, one less susceptible to the hazards of history. The advertising industry has also made this discovery. The more redundant a message, and the greater the variety of forms in which it can be communicated, the more likely it is that the message will not be lost. But there is another side to the coin: the greater the variety of mediums of communication, the greater the risk that the original message will become transformed, and will develop a life of its own.

The second reason why myths and rituals tend to be found together is because experience often demands explanation (Geertz, 15–21; Festinger; Fes-

tinger and Carlsmith). Faced with a ritual which they do not understand, some people will insist on finding explanations for what is happening. This is particularly true when rituals undergo a change, when once satisfactory explanations no longer suffice, or when no explanation exists at all.[2] Indeed, one of the roles of theologians is to do just this: to explain revelation and tradition in terms which are meaningful in the contemporary experiences of the faithful (e.g., Guzie and McIlhon on "confession"). Even if, as Fritz Staal insists, rituals are meaningless, their performance will frequently generate meanings. Observed action elicits interpretation. And it is not always possible to control the interpretation, as many people who serve in public positions, such as politicians, can testify.

In any discussion about the relationship between myth and ritual, we should not forget two things: that myth itself gives a rather important place to ritual and that many rituals consist, in part, if not in toto, of the recitation of myths. Let me be more specific about each point.

Among the major Sanskrit Purāṇas, the *Agni Purāṇa* is perhaps the most preoccupied with ritual forms. It describes in minute detail basic Śaiva and Tantric ritual acts. Like most of the Purāṇas it is a collection of materials. But that the ritual material is interspersed with mythology suggests an interrelationship between the two that is basic. Kees Bolle, in fact, feels that a proper understanding of many of the purāṇic texts of Hinduism requires an understanding of the rituals which form the context of the mythology. In his attempts at exegesis of an elaborate creation myth in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (I.5.27–40) he concludes that,

> the ritualistic influence is not found only in more or less isolated cultic passages . . . . Ritualistic influences are apparently capable of *pervading* mythical accounts. Whatever may be the entity which we have vaguely referred to as the 'spirit' creating the great purāṇas, ritualism must have been an integral part of it. [291, italics his]

Śiva's Sacred Games describes numerous rituals: Indra's initial worship at the site of the Śiva liṅgam in the oak forest (I.1.84–86), the rituals involved in laying out the structure of the city of Madurai (I.3.37–39), the ritual sacrifices involved in the miraculous birth of Mīnākṣī (I.4.6–9) and, above all, the elaborate marriage rituals (I.5.46–193, I.12.46–58).

Certain rituals involve, or are completely constituted by, the recitation of prescribed myths. One classic example is the ancient celebration in the fertile crescent of the Babylonian Akitu Festival. Of the five elements in the festival isolated by scholars, the second was the recitation of the creation story, the Enuma Elish (Hooke 1933, 8). The Jewish Passover Seder draws on specific ritual symbols to elicit the recitation of a mythology (Birnbaum, 19–53). The Seder meal is thus a commemoration of the events narrated during the ritual. And in the Mīnākṣi Temple of Madurai, endowments of 7,000 rupees have been established for the annual ritual recitation of portions of the *Periya Purāṇam*

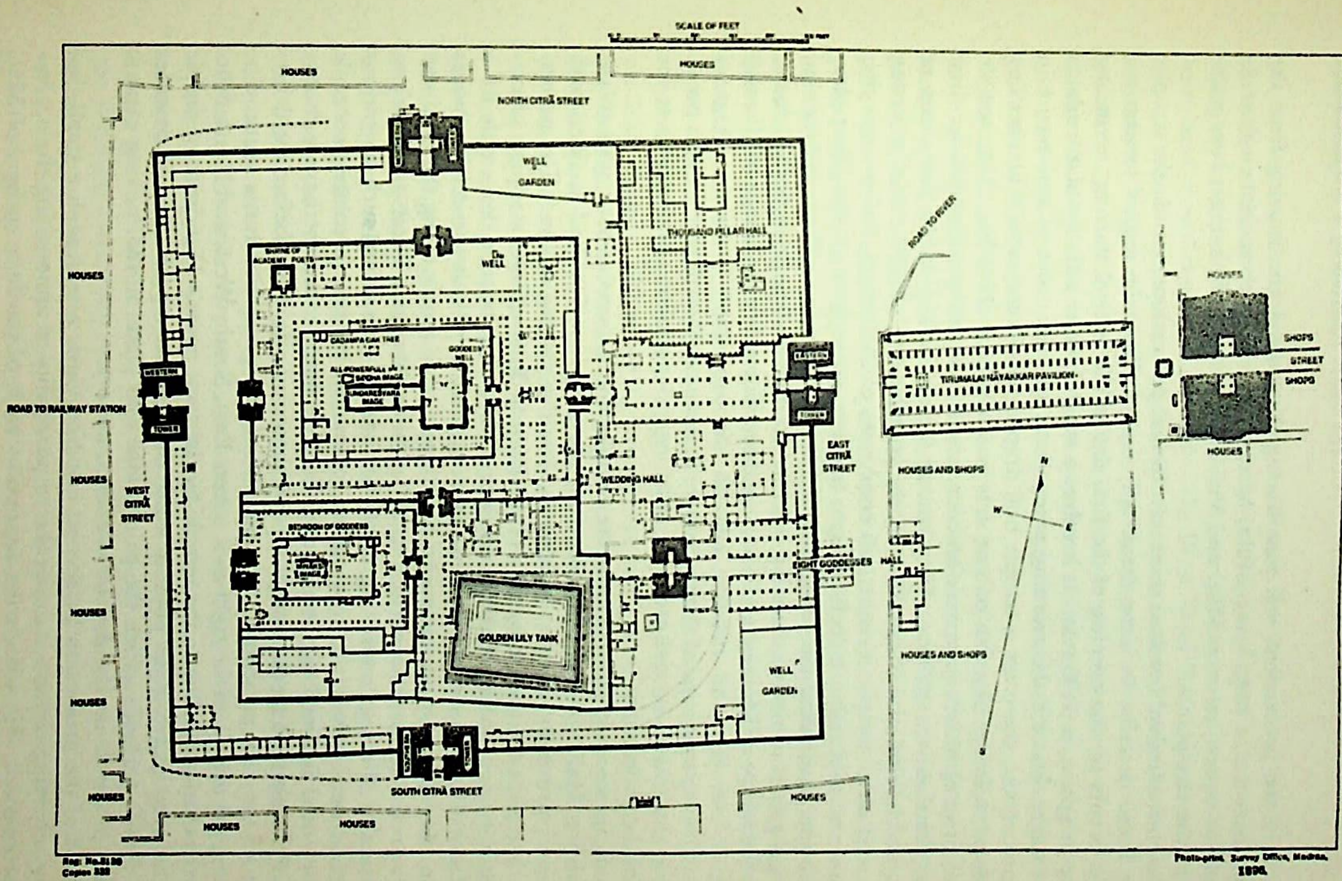
and of *Śiva's Sacred Games* (Pañcanatam Piḷḷai 1970, 154). Myths and rituals, then, tend to be found together. The fact that sometimes they are not means nothing more than what it is: an exception to the generalization. When they are found together, it is helpful to separate them for the purposes of analysis. They clearly affect one another, but each has an integrity of its own.

Three Interpretations of the Citrā Festival of Madurai

There are three points of view, at least, as to what constitutes "the Citrā Festival" of Madurai. They are the point of view of the ritual officiants of the Mīnākṣi Temple of Madurai, the point of view of the ritual officials of a second temple involved in the celebrations, the Aḷakarkōvil Temple some twelve miles northeast of Madurai, and, finally, the point of view of lay, devotee participants in the Citrā Festival.

A Local Temple Affair

By the account of the ritual officiants of the Mīnākṣi Temple, the Citrā Festival is a twelve-day affair which culminates with the marriage ceremony of Mīnākṣi and Śiva (Sundareśvara), and which ends with Indra worship (based on information from the 1970 printed temple festival program; on interviews with S. Cantiracēkara Paṭṭar and M. Maturai Paṭṭar in September 1970; and with Taṅkavēlu Tāciyār, the revenue manager of the temple, in October 1970). The twelve-day affair begins with a brief ceremony intended to alert "the watching deities," as I was told, of the coming festival and to ward off evil or inauspicious influences. On the first day of the festival at a precisely determined time in the morning, the "flag-raising ceremony" takes place within the temple. The ceremony begins at the moment when the sun's rays strike the image of the bull Nandin through a hole in the temple roof. Amidst elaborate ritual pomp which includes the presence of special pots of sprouting plants, kuśa grass, and offering plates, the flag, a stitched piece of cloth about two feet wide and fifty feet long, is twisted in a ropelike fashion and then wrapped around the flagpole which extends through the roof. Elaborate worship of the flagpole follows, with ablutions of milk, water, and sandalwood paste. Attention then turns to two sets of statues: one of Mīnākṣi with Śiva and the other of Mīnākṣi alone. For the purpose of festival rituals, the image of the god and goddess together is treated as though it were only the god.[3] The two sets of images are offered an elaborate worship (*pūjā*) and then displayed in procession around the temple, returning to a point directly adjacent to the flagpole. They remain there until evening, when they are taken again in procession. This time, the procession goes outside the temple. The temple itself consists of a series of concentric square walls, and the four outer temple walls are surrounded by four concentric sets of rectangular streets. The names of the streets upon which



The floor plan of the Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvara Temple, based on the 1896 survey plan in Francis (1907).

several of the processions will pass during the festival are, moving from the temple outward, Citrā, Āvaṇi Mūla, Māci, and Veḷi. The ancient city's walls were constructed between Māci and Veḷi Streets, the latter being a later addition to the city plan.

The entire festival involves seventeen formal processions outside the temple. Here I will describe in some detail only one of them, the second procession, which occurs on the evening of the first day of the festival starting, according to the program, at 7:00 P.M. It involves a much greater number of attendants and images than did the morning procession. In their order of appearance in the procession, there are a temple bull draped with a ceremonial blanket/flag bearing the forms of a fish on one side and a bull on the other, three temple camels, two elephants (one male and one female) and, mounted on rubber-tired carts, there are the deities. First among the deities is Gaṇeśa, eldest son of Śiva, and behind him comes Skanda, the younger son. A group of nine young men and older temple servants, all employees of the temple, follow, carrying ornamental umbrellas, colorful temple banners, and torches. Musicians playing drums and *nātacuram* (long clarinetlike instruments) follow, and behind them, a group of twelve chanting priests. In the two largest carts then come, first, the image of Mīnākṣī and Śiva together followed by the image of Mīnākṣī alone. The last and smallest cart in the procession bears an image of Caṇṭēcuranāyaṉār, one of the sixty-three famous canonized Tamil Śaiva poets. Behind that cart a second group of chanting priests follow, and constitute the end of the procession.

From its starting point within the temple, the procession first goes to the "Wedding Hall" in the outer court of the temple. The hall is filled with devotees, primarily women, waiting to view the passing deities. The procession then exits the temple by way of the Eastern Tower/Gate, stopping successively in front of three different commercial shops just outside the temple for a brief worship ceremony offered by the shop owners. As the procession moves out to Māci Street it passes several lighted votive oil lamps along the road and elicits presentations from various small, gathered groups. These presentations are usually offerings consisting of wicker baskets containing such auspicious things as betel leaves, whole coconuts, plantains, *kumkum* (a colored cosmetic powder used in worship), sacred ash, flowers, incense, and perhaps a money gift. Priests attending the images receive these and offer them before the deities to which they are presented. At Māci Street, the procession turns south, thus keeping the temple to the right as it covers East, South, West, and North Māci Streets before returning to the temple by the same route. Hundreds of people line the street at any given point to watch the procession pass. Several devotees offer flower garlands which the priests take and place on the moving carts at the feet of the image the devotee wishes to honor.

Ahead of the procession by several hundred yards a man with a small, but loudly reporting cannon assumes the responsibility of announcing the oncoming procession. He wheels the cannon to each of the four corners of Māci

Street, well ahead of the procession, and fires it several minutes before the rest of the procession arrives. Behind him a police van, equipped with loudspeakers, asks people to clear the streets. All public transportation, and especially buses, have been rerouted to clear the way. On West Māci Street a decorated bamboo and wood arch spans the width of the street and as the procession passes beneath it, winged cherublike puppet figures drop baskets of flower petals onto the deities' carts. On North Māci Street, the procession passes by the Vaiṣṇava Kṛṣṇa Temple. There, one of the Vaiṣṇava priests comes out of the temple and performs a brief worship ceremony to the image of Sundareśvara and Mīnākṣī which has halted there.[4]

One indication of the popularity of this particular appearance of the deities is the growing pile of half-coconuts and half-plantains in the large burlap bags attached to the underside of the image carts. Many hundreds of devotees will have prepared offering plates for the passing deities. The ambulatory priests take these offerings from devotees, present them to the deities by holding the plate before the face of the image, and then return half of the plate's contents, considered the "leavings" or "leftovers" from the gods (*piracātam*), a gracious sanctified gift returned to devotees. The other half goes into the burlap bags for temple use, and so the volume of offerings serves roughly to indicate the general response to the procession. On this, the first of the festival's processions outside temple walls, the response was excellent, said one priest.

According to the temple program all twelve evening processions take place on Māci Street. The morning processions vary more, both in terms of time and location. There are no morning processions outside the temple on the first, seventh, and twelfth days of the festival. On the fourth and tenth days the procession takes another route: the fourth day in order to reach a specially endowed pavilion and the tenth day the procession goes around Citrā Street.

During each procession the images of the goddess and of the god-goddess travel on different "vehicles". Each of the vehicles recalls specific iconographic and mythological associations, suggesting the more pervasive purāṇic themes (e.g., the "Wish-granting Tree" and "Lion" vehicles of day one; the "Ghost" and "Swan" vehicles of day two; the "Mount Kailāsa" and "Wish-granting Cow" vehicles of day four) or divine royalty (e.g., the "Golden Palanquin" of day four; the "Horse" vehicle of day five; the "Silver Throne" of day eight, and the "Cart Containing the Seven Elements Constituting a Kingdom" of day eleven; see also Pañcanatam Piḷḷai 1962, 5–13).

The processions were generally similar but there were occasional and significant variations. On the morning of the third day of the festival one priest, a Nampiyāṉ by title, joined the procession. Why it was this time and only this time, even he did not know. He had been designated to "act" as Śiva during the Wedding Ceremony, and so appeared in the procession this one time. His attire was not distinctive except for the metal bangle he wore around his right wrist, an ornament normally associated with the attire of the male Sikh.

The morning of the fifth day of the festival a much larger crowd than nor-

mal was assembled to see the procession exit from the temple. It was the New Year's day of the Tamil calendar. Devotees had come early to the temple to hear "The Reading of the Astrological Forecast" for the year to come, and had followed the deities, who had also graced the occasion, from the ceremony.

On the evening of the sixth day of the festival a new group of statues joined the procession: between the carts bearing the images of Skanda and of Mīnākṣi-Śiva had been inserted two other carts: one carrying the image of the famous poet Māṇikkavācakar and another carrying the images of twelve of the sixty-three Śaiva poet-saints. At one point on North Māci Street the entire procession stopped briefly to commemorate the episode in *Śiva's Sacred Games* describing the defeat of the Jains by Māṇikkavācakar (*TVP* III.63.4-82).

The procession of the seventh morning did not involve any image of Mīnākṣi nor any of Śiva in the form of Mīnākṣi's consort, Sundareśvara. Rather, that morning, a brief procession out to Māci Street and back took place involving images of Śiva garlanded with bones (Kaṅkālanātar) in his appearance as consort of the fierce goddess Kālī and of Gaṇeśa, Skanda, and Caṇṭēcuranāyaṉār (see also Fuller 1980, 339-41). The procession that evening was typical of the earlier ones except that it had an additional image, one that was placed between the carts of Skanda and of Śiva as Sundareśvara. The new cart carried the images of the Dancing Śiva (Naṭarāja) and of his consort Śivakāmi. This addition was apparently in preparation for the Lover's Quarrel ritual (*ūṭal*) between these two, staged in the temple on the eighth day during each of the temple's five major festivals (Fuller 1980, 339-41).

The evening procession of the eighth day was marked by the extraordinary attention given to the image of Mīnākṣi alone. The procession had been preceded by the temple ceremony of Mīnākṣi's coronation as ruler of the city. The coronation itself involved only the figure of the goddess and could well be regarded as the ritual which was completed with the evening's procession. I was told that it was a reenactment of the coronation of Mīnākṣi in *Śiva's Sacred Games*.[5] The images of Mīnākṣi and Śiva occupy separate sanctums in the temple during the day, and the coronation took place in the "Goddess Sanctum." No image of Śiva was anywhere in evidence. The elaborate ritual preparation culminated with the honoring of the jewelled crown and scepter at the foot of the image of the goddess. The two signs of royalty were bathed in water, smeared with sandalwood paste, and then placed on the goddess's image: the crown on her head, the scepter in her hand. The crown was adorned with leaves and flowers of the margosa tree (as specified in *TVP* I.4.40). Other royal paraphernalia accompanying the goddess included ornamental umbrellas, large banners, and a turbaned guard with a long scimitar. His role, he said, was to protect the precious jewel ornaments of the deities. The entire retinue proceeded to the Wedding Hall, where the other images of deities awaited the newly crowned monarch. There the procession formed in the standard order and exited through the large East Tower/Gate to East Māci Street.

The most noticeable departure from the normal processional rituals occurred

on the evening of ninth day of the festival. During this procession, Mīnākṣī reenacted her ceremonial conquest of the deities of the eight directions (*TVP* I.5.23–43). The normal procession formed, leaving the temple in the customary fashion. But when the procession reached Māci Street, Mīnākṣī's cart, carried on the shoulders of temple bearers, turned south. The other deities, with the Mīnākṣī-Śiva image, proceeded north. Mīnākṣī's retinue engaged in mock battles with each of the eight deities at the appropriate points on Māci Street. The battles began with the first opponent, Indra, whom Mīnākṣī met on East Māci Street (*TVP* I.5.23). Perched on the shoulders of bearers, the image of Mīnākṣī, bow in hand, rushed forward at the image of Indra, also hoisted aloft by bearers. The images alternately advanced and retreated in the midst of enthusiastic shouting and hooting by the crowds. Indra, on the goddess's third advance, made a permanent retreat and Mīnākṣī was then worshipped with lighted lamps as the victor. So it continued with Agni, Yama, Nirṛti, Varuṇa, Vāyu, Kubera, and finally Īśāna and Nandin, both Śiva's underlings. At the northeast corner of her circuit, where North Māci Street meets East Māci Street, Mīnākṣī confronted the image of Śiva and Mīnākṣī as a pair. There was no violent context this time. Her bow was taken from her image, and the two images returned together in procession to the temple, in contrast to the text, which indicates that Mīnākṣī returns alone (I.5.45).

The procession which preceded the actual wedding on the morning of the tenth day of the festival was very brief. It quickly covered the four shorter Citrā Streets and was noteworthy primarily because of the elaborate wedding regalia in which the deities were dressed. Following the brief procession, the images of Mīnākṣī-Śiva and of Mīnākṣī alone were taken into the temple, placed on the traditional "lover's swing," and then taken into the Marriage Hall. Attendance by worshippers at the marriage is carefully regulated. Those witnessing it must purchase tickets in the temple office well before the event. On the platform at the front of the hall the Mīnākṣī image was placed to the right of the Mīnākṣī-Śiva image, duplicating the spatial arrangement of the goddess shrine in relation to that of the god in the temple. Two other images of deities were brought into the Wedding Hall: that of Skanda and that of a local form of Viṣṇu known as the Lord Whose Soft Mouth Is the Color of Coral (Pavaḷakkaṉivāy Perumāḷ). Both images had come in procession together from the village of Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam, six miles away, to witness the wedding.[6] These two visiting deities were placed to the left of and slightly behind the Mīnākṣī-Śiva image, facing the crowds of human wedding guests. Two priests, dressed in decidedly royal attire, sat before the two main images. They played the roles of Mīnākṣī and of Śiva during the culminating rituals sealing the marriage.

Preliminary ceremonies lasted nearly an hour and involved priestly functions normally associated with any high caste marriage. The images of the bride and groom were honored by a series of lamp-waving rituals, as a group of priests seated near the front chanted Sanskrit verses. Bits of colored cord were

tied around the right wrists of the images of the bride and groom. Both images were garlanded, as the two role players also exchanged garlands. A series of silken scarves was tied on the images: white, yellow, red, and black. At the moment designated as the auspicious time for sealing the marriage the unmistakable crescendo of drums and horns began. The moment for the tying of the marriage necklace (*tāli*) had come. The *tāli* is the "central piece of a neck ornament solemnly tied by the bridegroom around the bride's neck as a marriage badge" (*TL*, 1848; see also Beck 1964, 114–32; Diehl, 189; Reynolds 1978). Three separate necklaces were tied around the neck of the image of the goddess by the priest acting as Śiva. The marriage accomplished, the newlyweds were then honored by wedding guests who filed by the images reverently. The entire group of priests circumambulated the two images as the concluding series of rituals continued. That evening the image of the god and goddess went around the four Māci Streets in procession, appearing publicly for the first time as the married pair.

The procession of the deities around the Māci Streets on the morning of the following day was, by far, the most enthusiastically attended of all the festival events to this point. It is termed the Cart Festival by virtue of the enormous vehicles in which the images of Mīnākṣi-Śiva and Mīnākṣi are transported. Each of the two carts is approximately forty to fifty feet high. Both are constructed of huge, intricately carved wooden chassis which are pulled by hundreds of devotees (see Hudson 1977, 107–19). Among the surging crowds that joined the procession were many groups of Vaiṣṇavas who appeared in a variety of festive attires (see Hudson 1982, 127–28). Some carried large fans to cool those who were pulling the huge carts. Others wore bells and elaborate costumes with large headdresses. Many of these latter devotees carried nozzled water bags with which they squirted water onto the crowds. Other groups of distinctively dressed Vaiṣṇavas chanted devotional songs, accompanying themselves with chimes while, at the same time, distributing pinches of sugar to all who would take them. That evening, a more staid procession occurred again around the Māci Streets.

The last evening of the twelve-day Wedding Festival involved a rather lackluster, standard Māci Streets procession. As soon as the procession returned to the temple, the festival flag was lowered and the festival was officially over. During that last day the newly married divine couple rested in the temple. They received worshippers in the Wedding Hall until noon, at which time they were taken in procession through the temple and came to rest on the banks of the Golden Lily Tank just outside Mīnākṣi's sanctum. There they received worshippers until the evening processional. During that same afternoon the ritual known as Indra Worship takes place. Considered the last of the incidents from *Śiva's Sacred Games* to be reenacted during the Wedding Festival, it commemorates Indra's initial worship of Śiva in the cadamba oak forest before the establishment of the town of Madurai on the same spot (I.1.76–86). The ritual during the festival involves taking the image of Indra to the spot where

each of the five processional deities rests beside the tank and placing Indra before each one to represent his worshipping each. With the performance of this ritual, the festival officially ends.

It is significant that in the temple ritual Indra does his worship to the deities on the edge of the Golden Lily Tank, for the account of the story in the text tells how, after building an arch over Śiva's shrine in the forest, Indra despairs, unable to perform proper worship with appropriate flower offerings. Śiva's grace, however, provides: suddenly there appears on the tank about which his guru had spoken (verse 71) some exquisite blossoms. These are used for the worship and from this event the name of the Golden Lily Tank is taken (verse 80). Although the actual form of the ritual in the text does not involve Indra's worshipping the five processional deities, as is done in the temple ritual, the time of the event is the same: in I.1.94 Śiva instructs Indra to return to this holy place and to worship once a year at the full moon of the month of Citrā.

The View from Aḷakarkōvil

For the Śaivas of Madurai, the "Citrā Festival" of that city is primarily concerned with the wedding of Śiva and Mīnākṣī, as I have only briefly described it. We have seen that deities from temples outside the city are also involved, and that two of them attend the actual marriage ceremony inside the Mīnākṣī Temple. We turn our attention now to another temple, the Aḷakarkōvil Temple, which lies twelve miles northeast of Madurai, for it, too, celebrates a festival during the month of Citrā. During that festival the temple's major deity, a form of Viṣṇu known as the Beautiful One (Aḷakar) travels to the city of Madurai. Significant for us is the fact that both temples celebrate festivals during the month of Citrā in contiguous locations. But there are other interesting connections between these two shrines. For one thing, the primary male deity in each temple, (Sundareśvara at Madurai and Aḷakar at Aḷakarkōvil) is worshipped as the Beautiful Lord. This unusual situation inspires speculation:

> . . . it would be risky today to try to decide whether it was Viṣṇu or Śiva who was first worshipped at Madurai in the form of a young and beautiful deity. It is even possible that these two were preceded by an even more ancient divine figure from the Tamil country which the devotees of Śiva and Viṣṇu then identified with the deity of their choice. [Dessigane, Pattabiramin, Filliozat 1960, 1:i, translation mine]

For another, the Sanskrit place-history of the Aḷakarkōvil temple traces the origins of that temple to King Malayadhvaja Pāṇḍya, son of the founder of Madurai and, according to *Śiva's Sacred Games*, the father of the queen/goddess Mīnākṣī (Somasundaram 1961, 409; Hudson 1982, 121–24). The goddess Mīnākṣī appears in the Aḷakarkōvil place-history, but there, instead of appearing as Malayadhvaja's daughter (*TVP* I.4.), she is the miraculously born daughter of Malayadhvaja's grandson. Despite the minor inconsistencies, the

two documents do share the theme whereby Mīnākṣī is born a Pāṇḍya daughter, rules as a queen, conquers the world, and eventually marries Śiva.

Given these basic similarities, and given the fact that both temples celebrate their "Citrā Festival" in a way which allows devotees of each deity to mingle, and to participate together, it comes as a bit of a shock to hear that the two celebrations, in an official sense, have little to do with one another. In other words, there is a second point of view as to what constitutes the Citrā Festival of Madurai. This second point of view is well represented by one of the priests of the Aḷakarkōvil Temple, Tiru Ma. Irāmāṉuca Ācārya (interviewed 10 March 1970). According to him, and to several of his fellow priests with whom I later had talks, the Citrā Festival of Aḷakarkōvil has nothing to do with the Citrā Festival of Madurai. The festival associated with the temple of Viṣṇu (Aḷakar), and which occurs in the month of Citrā, is a separate nine-day affair. It involves Viṣṇu's going in procession to the Vaigai River at Madurai in order to commemorate the freeing of a holy man (*ṛṣi*) from a curse. Though this actual Pilgrimage Festival, as it is called, is not mentioned in the Aḷakarkōvil place-history, the story of why it occurs can be found there, and in several more detailed devotional pamphlets usually available from street vendors each year at the time of the festival (see Hudson 1981, 121–24). The kernel episode, as told by my informant and as narrated inside the front cover of the Aḷakarkōvil Temple's festival program is as follows:

> An ascetic named Sutapas was doing penance in the hills above the Aḷakarkōvil Temple on the banks of a sacred stream called the Nūpura Gaṅgā. Another group of ascetics came to the same pool for their ablutions. Sutapas did not greet them, plunged as he was deep in meditation. One of the newcomers, Durvāsar, was angered by this neglect and so he cursed Sutapas to take the form of a frog. The unfortunate Sutapas prayed to the great Viṣṇu of the temple there to relieve him of the curse and to restore him to manhood once more. Viṣṇu was impressed by the petitions and agreed to help. Viṣṇu himself took a vow that he would make a religious pilgrimage to Madurai, and then further to the "Sweet-Town Pavilion" in the middle of the Vaigai River for the performance of a special ceremony intended to eliminate curses. Completely eliminating the curse also required the intercession of Śrī Āṇṭāḷ [a former human female devotee who now is revered as a spouse of Viṣṇu], and whose image Viṣṇu meets as he passes through the village of Tallākuḷam on the outskirts of Madurai. There Viṣṇu stops to rest and to receive a garland from her. Since the road from Aḷakarkōvil to Madurai is the land of the fierce Kaḷḷar tribe, Aḷakar goes through this area dressed as a Kaḷḷar. He removes his Kaḷḷar garb at the Mysore Pavilion just outside Madurai and changes back at the same place on his return trip to Aḷakarkōvil.

During the ritual enactment of this Pilgrimage Festival thousands of villagers come to the city to see Viṣṇu (in the form of Aḷakar) arrive at the Tallākuḷam Temple, where he meets Āṇṭāḷ, and to view him as he descends into the Vaigai River bed (dry during the hot season) at the appointed moment: full moon of

the month of Citrā. This descent into the Vaigai River is the most enthusiastically attended event of the Pilgrimage to Madurai. As he descends into the river amidst throngs of thousands who want to catch a glimpse of the deity's form, his image is carried to the middle of the riverbed, where the image of another deity meets him, another form of Viṣṇu from a Vaiṣṇava temple within Madurai. The deity's name is the Beautiful Lord of Madurai (Kūṭal Aḷakar). But there is no question that the form of Viṣṇu from outside Madurai is the more important of the two: the image and its vast retinue spend three days in the Madurai area receiving honors wherever they go and visiting a variety of pavilions and minor Vaiṣṇava temples. On the ninth day of the festival, Viṣṇu returns in procession to Aḷakarkōvil. The Journey Festival is far more complicated than I have indicated in this brief summary. Hudson (1981) has paid particular attention to many of the details I have omitted. Readers interested may wish to consult his excellent article.

Thus, the official, priestly, and literate version of what constitutes the Citrā Festival of the Aḷakarkōvil temple makes no mention of the Wedding Festival as it occurs almost simultaneously within the city. The inverse is also true: all three of the Mīnākṣi Temple officials whom I interviewed denied that there was any connection between their Marriage Festival and the Vaiṣṇava Journey Festival.

These two exclusive, orthodox, and priestly versions contrast remarkably with the version of what constitutes the Citrā Festival recounted by the vast majority of devotees, both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava, of the Madurai area. The perspective of the common devotee, of the layman, so to speak, is what constitutes the third and, by far, the most common version of what occurs in Madurai each year at about the time of the Citrā full moon. To this perspective I now turn.

The View from Outside the Temples

When I asked disinterested spectators, such as Christians or Muslims from Madurai, or when I asked lay devotees of either Viṣṇu or of Mīnākṣi and Śiva, I was told that Viṣṇu's coming to Madurai had a direct connection with the wedding ceremony of Mīnākṣi and Śiva. The vast majority of people in and around Madurai explain the Citrā Festival in terms of a marriage, and they insist that Viṣṇu is intimately involved. This account I shall call the lay myth. The basic outline of this myth is as follows.

> The wedding of Mīnākṣī and Śiva is celebrated each year in the Madurai Temple. Viṣṇu, in the form of Aḷakar, is the brother of Mīnākṣī. He comes to Madurai from Aḷakarkōvil each year in order to attend her wedding. But for some reason he does not arrive in Madurai on time. As he crosses the riverbed of the Vaigai River on his way to the wedding, he meets another deity, Kūṭal Aḷakar, who is also a form of Viṣṇu, and who resides in his temple within Madurai. Kūṭal Aḷakar explains to Mīnākṣī's brother that the wedding has already taken place without him. Viṣṇu is angered that they

> would have proceeded without him and so refuses to enter the city. He gives the wedding gift intended for his sister to Kūṭal Aḷakar who is instructed to pass it on to Mīnākṣī. He then proceeds down the river (breaking the southwesterly direction of his trip), visiting other Vaiṣṇava shrines and privately endowed pavilions. He spends the night in a small Vaiṣṇava temple in the suburb of Vaṇṭiyūr, a temple dedicated to the deity Vīrarākava Perumāḷ. There, that night, he is said to have sexual relations with a Muslim mistress named Tulukka Nācciyār. The next day he appears to his devotees in his ten forms, and then returns to his own temple at Aḷakarkōvil.

This general version of the lay mythology is far more prevalent than the points of view claiming that Viṣṇu has nothing to do with Mīnākṣī's wedding. During my two years of residence in Madurai it was the only version I had heard or read before I talked with ritual officials in either temple. It is the only version presented in the extensive description of the festival in Centil Tuṟavi (216) or in the front page Tamil newspaper article on the festival in the Madurai *Tiṉa Tanti* (20 April 1970). Hudson indicates that it is the only version presented in English-language festival accounts by Francis (285–86), Jones (*ERE*, 8:239–40), and Thomas (60–61). There are some interesting variations on this basic outline, though. One claims that Kūṭal Aḷakar is, from the beginning, Mīnākṣī's envoy. He meets Viṣṇu in the middle of the Vaigai River to beg him to enter the city to visit the newly married couple (recounted by E. Annamalai, Chicago, 1974). This version represents Kūṭal Aḷakar as intermediary and gift bearer, a role which is suggested also in the basic myth. As a deity from inside the city, Kūṭal Aḷakar would naturally be expected to intercede for the city's goddess Mīnākṣī.

Another version has it that Viṣṇu cannot come to the wedding because of an inauspicious event: someone sneezes while he is crossing the Vaigai River. The inauspicious sneeze causes him to change his mind about attending (Slater, 105). A third variant uses the vehicle of the inauspicious sneeze as a priestly plot. In this case, the sneeze occurs during the temple marriage ceremony: the priests cannot complete the ceremony and so are assured the opportunity to recelebrate the marriage each year. Viṣṇu cannot come to the marriage because it does not "really" occur (Centil Turavi, 219; also see Shulman 1980, 145–57, 221–23, 349–50).

A fourth variant concerns itself with why Viṣṇu somehow arrives late in Madurai. A glance at the festival program of ritual events illustrates that Viṣṇu begins his pilgrimage to Madurai the day after the wedding in the temple occurs. The reason for this, goes the fourth version, is that he has been misinformed about the date. The culprit here is Tallākuḷam Perumāḷ, the deity at whose temple Viṣṇu rests on the day before entering the Vaigai River. Thus, Tallākuḷam Perumāḷ is also known as Tale-Bearing or Falsehood-Telling Viṣṇu (Centil Turavi, 216).

Carasvati Vēṇukōpāl (127–31) has shown that the Citrā Festival also figures prominently as a subject for children's lullabies in the Madurai area. In one

of the songs she analyzes, it is Mīnākṣi herself who meets her brother in the middle of the Vaigai. And although he brings her many wedding gifts, the goddess goes away crying. Presumably, the tears are because Viṣṇu will not, cannot, or has not attended the wedding.

Although these variants seek to explain or to resolve problematic details, the one point they have in common is the assumption that Viṣṇu comes to Madurai in order to attend the wedding. Even for the many thousands of Vaiṣṇavas who come to Madurai to worship Viṣṇu as Aḷakar, the occasion for the pilgrimage in their minds is, primarily, the marriage of Mīnākṣi and Śiva.

It is tempting to view the exclusive priestly accounts of the festival events as an excessive concern on the part of each tradition to maintain orthodox, and orthoprax, purity. And while this concern may be involved, it is also the case that those who maintain that the two Citrā Festivals are in fact separate events do so by buttressing their argument with the perspective of history. Specifically, they claim that before the reign of King Tirumalai Nāyakkar in the Madurai area in the early seventeenth century, the two festivals did not even occur at the same time. Independent evidence does suggest that before the seventeenth century, the Wedding Festival of Madurai was celebrated not in Citrā (April-May) but rather in Māci (February-March) or in Paṅkuṉi (March-April).[7] And there is some question as to whether the Aḷakarkōvil Pilgrimage Festival has always been celebrated in the month of Citrā: Irāmāṉuca Ācārya insisted that King Tirumalai Nāyakkar also changed the date of the Pilgrimage Festival. Originally, he said, the curse-elimination ceremony occurred at the Sweet Town Pavilion on the full-moon day of the month of Tai (January-February). For this occasion, he continued, it was customary to decorate the pavilion with dry paddy, a practice which Diehl (169) independently notes is associated with a pilgrimage of deities, both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava, at Tai full moon. Once, however, a fire broke out and the image of Viṣṇu was endangered, though saved. After this, the curse-elimination ceremony, as well as the pilgrimage, were discontinued because they were deemed inauspicious. But when King Tirumalai Nāyakkar, a Vaiṣṇava, came to power he wanted to revive the ceremony and to associate it with the Marriage Festival of the Mīnākṣi Temple. He had the two ceremonies combined so that, my informant conjectured, they would result in a grander festival and so that Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas, who were not on good terms at the time, might be brought together in a single celebration.

Though a complete evaluation of Irāmāṉuca Ācārya's account is not appropriate at this point, there are several sources of independent evidence suggesting that the main outlines of his account are true. We know that King Tirumalai Nāyakkar was a Vaiṣṇava, though the traditional story of why he moved his administrative capital from the town of Tiruccirāppaḷḷi to Madurai suggests that he also became something of a devotee of the goddess Mīnākṣi. Indeed, becoming her devotee would be, at the least, a political expedient for anyone who wanted the loyalty of the people who inhabit her city. Like the

tradition about a Pāṇḍya King before him (*TVP* III.62.62ff.) and into whose royal line he was symbolically stepping, Tirumalai Nāyakkar was said to have been miraculously cured of an illness by the goddess (Kōvintacāmi Aiyar, 3–5; Francis, 49). We also know that Tirumalai Nāyakkar manipulated festival dates and details on other occasions in Madurai. He even changed one festival's date, the Mīnākṣī Temple's impressive Tank Festival, so that it coincided with his birthday (Kōpālacāmi Nāyakkar, 17–21; Parantāmanār 1974, 137–44; Parantāmanār 1963; Cantiracēkara Paṭṭar, 107–12). Whether the curse-elimination ceremony and the pilgrimage to the Vaigai River were truly changed from the month of Tai is an issue which remains open.

A historical analysis, then, can be very helpful as we seek to understand how two festivals have now become, in the minds of most participants, one great ritual event. If we work with the reasonable hypothesis that the grandeur of a religious festival that attracts literally hundreds of thousands of pilgrims reflects in some respects the grandeur of a kingdom and its king, many of the historical details begin to fall into place. Large festival crowds in the Madurai area are not possible in Māci, the height of the harvest season when people are laboring intensively on the harvest. So, the Wedding Festival may have been changed to Citrā, the end of the harvest season, when people have more time and more money to spend. Further, we are reasonably sure that Tirumalai Nāyakkar provided the two large, majestic carts used for the Cart Festival on the day that follows the marriage. More people were needed to pull these huge carts, and so it was necessary to change the Marriage Festival to a time when agricultural laborers were free.

It has also been proposed that as a Vaiṣṇava, Tirumalai Nāyakkar was especially concerned to bring about harmony between Vaiṣṇavas and the majority Śaivas in the Madurai area. This seems reasonable in light of the fact that the city which was his capital had always been a Śaiva religious center, ruled by Śaiva kings, the Pāṇḍyas. And in this sense the festival is a unique event: it does bring Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas together in an unprecedented way.

Further, Hudson has presented an intriguing theory to suggest that Tirumalai Nāyakkar gained significantly greater political hegemony over the Madurai area by associating the two festivals with each other. The Kaḷḷar caste, which controlled the outlying areas of Madurai, was incorporated into the kingdom ritually by virtue of its close association with Viṣṇu in the form of Aḻakar. Recall that during the Pilgrimage to Madurai, Viṣṇu is dressed as a Kaḷḷar and is accompanied by Kaḷḷar ritual specialists. It may have been necessary to include the Kaḷḷar in this way since their control of the areas north and west of Madurai made any Madurai king dependent on them for exterior communication and trade (Hudson 1971, 111–13). Jean Filliozat has offered indirect support for this theory. Given the martial predominance of the Kaḷḷar in the area, he believes that the Kaḷḷar caste once usurped the Pāṇḍya throne, taking on a more royal appearance in the process by calling themselves "Kallabhra" (Filliozat 1968, 291).

Given this historical perspective, it is possible to understand the more orthodox points of view about the Citrā Festival of Madurai. The event is perceived, and enacted, by the temple authorities of the two major temples involved as though there were no connection between the two temples. And it is likely that before the reign of Tirumalai Nāyakkar there was no relationship between the two festivals. But a change of calendar for one, if not both, of the festivals has brought them together. An alliance of what were once two separate festivals has thus created a single festival event as perceived by the vast majority of Hindu devotees. What the change brought about was, quite literally, an entirely new festival and a radically different point of view as to what was happening. That new understanding is represented by the pervasive mythology which insists that Viṣṇu comes to Madurai primarily for the wedding of Mīnākṣi and Śiva.

Nevertheless, whatever historical causes there may have been for the rearrangement of festival dates, the vitality of the Citrā Festival today cannot be completely explained by those historical events. Even if, as the more orthodox points of view may suggest, the lay myth which associates the two festivals is nothing more than a royal fabrication, or the result of "popular imagination," many of the sources of that myth's power lie beyond the political realities of seventeenth century Madurai.

I propose that the persistence and the power of this widespread lay myth are derived from two basic sources. First, the city of Madurai is among the most sacred of the centers of Tamil religion and culture. As we have seen in chapter two, Madurai was the home of the famous Tamil Literary Academy. It remains today the home of the goddess Mīnākṣī, and it constitutes the realm in which she exercises her considerable power. It is not surprising that her coronation and her marriage would provide a compelling occasion for gods and mortals to make a pilgrimage to her city, her temple, and her marriage.

The second source of the myth's power is derived from the symbol of marriage among Hindus. To organize the world, its human and its divine elements, in terms of kinship categories is to comprehend it and to experience it intimately. The myth which creates a single festival out of two does precisely this. Just as a marriage creates an enduring alliance, so does this myth when it posits marriage as the common element in a series of ritual events. Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas, rural and urban, mortal and divine, are comprehended in this cosmic alliance in a way that reflects the particular kinship categories of Tamil Hindu culture. To a discussion of these two major points I now turn.

The Festival as a Celebration of the City

In his comparative study of Indian and Chinese urban architecture, Nelson Wu (44ff.) isolates Madurai as the example par excellence of the sacred or-

ganization of urban space in the Hindu tradition (see also Julian Smith). The Mīnākṣi Temple is clearly the geographic and ritual center of the ancient city of Madurai. Around the temple were constructed in concentric squares the temple walls, the city streets, and finally the city walls. But ancient ceremonial centers such as Madurai organized much more than just the territory encompassed by the city's exterior walls. By means of a process Paul Wheatley (310–20, 389, 430) calls "synoecism," the great ceremonial centers of a region are able to extend their influences outward, "binding surrounding regions to the city," subordinating the rural and village deities and temples to the deity and the temple of the sacred center. Thus, the power of these ancient shrines lies primarily in their ability to organize existential as well as geographic space: they become centers of religious teaching and of ritual activity in reference to which all outlying areas must act and respond.

I believe that by means of the Citrā Festival, and the lay mythology which incorporates the Viṣṇu of Aḷakarkōvil into the marriage of Mīnākṣi, the goddess and her temple have firmly established control over the geographic and existential space far beyond Madurai. In this sense, the Citrā Festival is a celebration of the city. To be more explicit, it is a celebration of the city even by those who do not reside there. Each year, during the festival, the city's sacrality becomes in many ways nonsectarian. Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas come together to worship each others' deities and to participate together in many of the same rituals. Even Muslims are incorporated in a nominal sense for, as we have seen, the lay mythology suggests that Viṣṇu spends a night of wild abandon with a Muslim mistress inside a local Vaiṣṇava temple.

Alan Beals notes in his study of village festivals in southern India a similar phenomenon. He observes that the rituals "are so structured as to permit almost every resident caste and sect to attend and participate," and concludes that in these festivals, "the myth and ritual appear to be an expression of the entire village, a further indication of the temporary submergence of internal segmentation" (105). During the Citrā Festival of Madurai a remarkable unity in the city emerges by virtue of the fact that the attention of devotees, Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava alike, is focused on events surrounding the marriage of the goddess Mīnākṣi.

The Festival in the Perspective of Textual Hinduism

If we, like the vast majority of lay devotees, see the Citrā Festival as an event which primarily focuses on a marriage celebration, the implications of the marriage dynamic are revealing. Two important elements in the lay mythology are especially worthy of attention: first, the claim that Mīnākṣi, an incarnation of the goddess Pārvatī, is the sister of Viṣṇu (Aḷakar) and second, the claim that Viṣṇu, angry because the marriage has been celebrated without him, storms away, refusing to enter the ancient boundaries of Madurai. Each of these elements in the account of the wedding I want to consider carefully.

Day	Marriage Festival	Dates during Festival of 1970	Pilgrimage Festival	Day
1	Morning Flag Raising Evening Procession	April 10		
2	Morning Procession Evening Procession	11		
3	Morning Procession Evening Procession	12		
4	Morning Procession Evening Procession	13		
5	Morning Procession Evening Procession	14		
6	Morning Procession Evening Procession	15		
7	Evening Procession	16		
8	Morning Procession Coronation-Evening Procession	← 17	Aḻakar in Wedding Hall	1
9	Morning Procession World Conquest-Evening Procession	← 18	Aḻakar in Wedding Hall	2
10	Morning Procession, Wedding, Evening Pro.	← 19	Aḻakar in Wedding Hall	2
11	Morning Cart Festival Evening Procession	← 20 →	Pilgrimage up to Tallākulam	4
12	Newlyweds receive guests Indra Pūjā, Even. Pros.	← 21 →	Aḻakar enters Vaigai, Rests at Vaṇṭiūr	5
		22 →	Curse lifted at Tēnūr, Rāmārāyar Hall avataras	6
		23	Spends night at Hall of Rāmanātapuram King	7
		24	Last Stage of Pilgrimage	8
		25	Reaches Aḻakarkōvil Temple at 7:00 a.m.	9

NOTE: Dates enclosed by rectangle (April 17-22) indicate the popular perception of what constitutes the Citrā Festival. Arrows indicate relative size of devotee attendance at ritual events indicated by arrows, as based on impressionistic observations.

The events of the Marriage Festival of Madurai and of the Pilgrimage Festival of Aḻakarkōvil during 1970 are here juxtaposed. Dates enclosed by the rectangle (April 17–22) indicate the lay perception of what constitutes the Citrā Festival. Lengths of arrows indicate author's impressions of the relative size of devotee attendance at ritual events indicated by arrows.

Śiva's Sacred Games does not claim that Viṣṇu is Mīnākṣi's brother. But it almost does. The text clearly indicates that it is Viṣṇu who gives Mīnākṣi to Śiva in the marriage ceremony:

> Standing on one side, Viṣṇu took the hand of the goddess,
> a hand which is like the blooming [white] kāntaḷ flower—
> and placed it into the holy, red, lotus flowerlike
> hand of the Great One [Śiva].
> As mantras were chanted, Viṣṇu poured water [onto the right hands]
> from a pot while celestials poured down showers of flowers
> as they watched in reverence.
> [I.5.178]

In his commentary on this verse, Na. Mu. Vēṅkaṭacāmi Nāṭṭār explains why it is Viṣṇu, rather than Malayadhvaja Pāṇḍya, Mīnākṣi's father, who gives the bride away. He says that Viṣṇu has the right because Viṣṇu is the bride's brother and because her father has passed away.[8] This point of view is not a simple fabrication of the commentator. There is a pervasive tradition, in both Sanskrit and Tamil literature, that Viṣṇu is intimately involved in Śiva's marriage. In one instance, Viṣṇu gives Śiva one of his (Viṣṇu's) three wives, Gaṅgā, because she cannot get along with Viṣṇu's other wives, Lakṣmi and Rādhā (*Brahm.* II.6.53–60). In the actual marriage ceremony, sometimes Viṣṇu is no more than an important guest (*Brahm.* IV.44.11–23). Sometimes he is the officer in charge of Śiva's marriage party (*Śiva* III.43.37–39). But he also appears as the brother of the bride whom he actually gives away in the wedding ceremony (*Liṅga* I.103.48; also see Gonda 1970, 102; Gonda 1962, 2:77). In significant parts of India, north and south, Viṣṇu and a Śaiva goddess are said to be brother and sister. (Biardeau, p.11, note 1). In some cases, the sister is Māriyammaṉ (Younger 1983, 20; Cantāṉam, 10). Though the Mīnākṣi of Madurai is said to have Viṣṇu in the form of Aḷakar as her brother, the Mīnākṣi of Houston, Texas claims Venkateśvara, a different form of Viṣṇu, for her brother (Kannapan, 12). On occasion we find no explicit mention of Viṣṇu's being associated with Śiva in the context of a marriage, but frequently it is implied. Indeed, it would be difficult to conceive of Śiva's marriage without including in it somewhere the ritual presence of that other great deity with whom Śiva must deal in other parts of his life. But it is, in particular, the Tamil tradition that provides consistent evidence of Viṣṇu's being perceived as the brother of Śiva's wife, as, in other words, Siva's brother-in-law. For example, one of the widespread terms for the younger son of Śiva is "Viṣṇu's nephew" (*Māyōṉ marukaṉ*). To refer to Skanda, or Murugan as he is more commonly known in the south, as "Viṣṇu's nephew" is an indirect way of positing an in-law relationship between Śiva and Viṣṇu. Brenda Beck's study of Tamil folklore has isolated this relationship as a basic element in what she calls the kin nucleus in Tamil folklore. She says, "The basic South Indian Hindu pantheon thus contains a married couple (Śiva and Pārvatī), plus Pārvatī's all im-

portant male sibling (Viṣṇu), their father Brahmā, and two sons, Ganesh . . . and Murugan" (1974, 11; see also Moffat, 249).

The second issue in the lay myth, that Viṣṇu leaves Madurai angry because he cannot attend the wedding, has posed something of a problem for those who would defend the inclusive version of the myth. If Viṣṇu leaves Madurai early, who ends up giving Mīnākṣī to Śiva in the marriage? How can Viṣṇu's early departure square with the description of the marriage in *Śiva's Sacred Games*, where Viṣṇu is obviously there, giving her to Śiva? We know that the famous statuary in the temple represents the "water-pouring ceremony" at which time Śiva receives his wife from Viṣṇu. Tradition, far from being thwarted by contradiction, seems to thrive on it. The answer is obvious: if we recall that there *is* a form of Viṣṇu present at the ritual ceremony, the form known as the Lord Whose Soft Mouth Is the Color of Coral, the problem resolves itself. Viṣṇu has several forms: one of them gives the bride away in the ceremony, another (Kūṭal Aḷakar) acts as the bride's emissary to Viṣṇu in the form of Aḷakar, and the third, the Viṣṇu from Aḷakarkōvil, goes away angry. Here we learn an important lesson in the study of Hindu mythology. The ability of deities to assume different forms, or to be reborn into new or even multiple circumstances, as situations demand, is a marvelous gift. It provides the basis for reconciliation of contradictory traditions, and it teaches us that no one form of the deity comprehends his or her essence. Thus, in *Śiva's Sacred Games*, Śiva can be a bangle seller, a dirt carrier, an omnipotent magician, a horse trainer, a king, a swordsman, a mother pig feeding her piglets, a fierce warrior, a gracious son-in-law, and much more.

Śiva and Viṣṇu in Conflict and Reconciliation

But let us return to the angry brother-in-law, for it is on this form of Viṣṇu that the lay festival mythology tends to focus. In their respective mythological traditions, Śiva and Viṣṇu have a long history of alternating dissension and reconciliation. Sukumari Bhattacharji organizes her study of Indian mythology around this theme. Viṣṇu, the Vedic god, is described as a solar deity, associated with day and light, gold, the sea and water, life, sacrifice to the gods, multiple incarnations, a polygamous life-style that is patriarchal, and one which regards the woman primarily as a lover. His "conceptually irreconcilable" opposite is Śiva, the non-Vedic deity, a lunar god associated with night and darkness, silver, the mountains, death and mortuary rites to the ancestors, no incarnations, a relatively monogamous life-style that is matriarchal, and which regards the woman primarily as a mother (9–17).

Although Jan Gonda (1970) believes that it was not until the first century C.E. that the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava traditions developed separate identities, he traces some of their basic differences back to the Ṛg Veda, where Rudra, Śiva's prototype, is portrayed as uncultivated, unconquered, unreliable, unpre-

dictable, and one who causes fever, evil, and disaster. He is a cheat and the lord of robbers, living in the forests away from civilization. Viṣṇu, by contrast, is pervasive and beneficial, identified with the center of habitations, an approachable friend who is near to devotees. He is associated with the sacrifice and, for devotees' benefit, helps it to reach heaven. Viṣṇu, the god of seed and regeneration, stands in glaring contrast to Rudra, the god of destruction (3–17, 87–89).

These oppositions take more concrete form in the later purāṇic mythology, where Śiva and Viṣṇu alternately clash and effect reconciliations. The conflicts tend to cluster around particular episodes which then get reworked by Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava tradition. Each sectarian version proposes a resolution more favorable to its own deity. One such "worked-over" episode is that of Dakṣa's sacrifice. Dakṣa is the father of another of Śiva's wives, Satī. He sponsors a great sacrifice to which he invites all the gods except Śiva. Using this basic plot, the *Mahābhārata* stipulates that Dakṣa had been advised to invite Śiva, but invited only Viṣṇu. Śiva, angry about his exclusion, arrives and destroys the sacrifice in the form of the monster Vīrabhadra (*Mahābhārata*, vulgate XII: 283: 38, as cited by Bhattacharji, 122; see also *Kūrma* 15.68). In this case, Śiva destroys everything, including other deities in addition to Viṣṇu. Apparently, the earlier myths about Dakṣa's sacrifice demonstrate conflict between Rudra and all other gods. The later ones, however, are more inclined to portray the conflict as one between Śiva and Viṣṇu (Gonda 1962, 2:78; Bhattacharji, 121–22). In the *Liṅga Purāṇa* (100.32), for example, Śiva's clear superiority is demonstrated as he beheads Viṣṇu. But in the *Harivaṃśa* (III.32ff.) it is Viṣṇu who defeats Śiva: Śiva's traditional blue neck is attributed to Viṣṇu's strangling him on this occasion. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (IV.2.7ff.), also Vaiṣṇava, does not portray Śiva's crashing the sacrifice at all. Instead, Dakṣa spends several verses defending his decision not to invite Śiva: Śiva is unclean, haunts cremation grounds, wears snakes and ashes, carries a skull. He is, in short, disgusting.

A second kernel episode which gets reworked by each tradition is the story about Hiraṇyakaśipu, a demon who obtained remarkable powers and whose primary allegiance seems to have been to Śiva. The Vaiṣṇava redactions of the story in the *Padma Purāṇa* (5.42) and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (7.4.28) portray the evil demon as a blatant Śaiva. His son, Prahlāda, becomes an ardent Vaiṣṇava, however, and so the evil Hiraṇyakaśipu tries to kill his own son. But Viṣṇu intervenes on behalf of his devotee, takes the form of a man-lion (Narasimha) and kills the evil Śaiva father. In apparent sectarian response the *Śiva Purāṇa* (Rudra Saṃhitā, 5.43) takes the episode one step further: Śiva then appears in the form of Sarabha (part man, part bird, and part beast) and kills Viṣṇu.

Instances of conflict between Śiva and Viṣṇu could be multiplied (Gonda 1962, 2:91–94; Gonda 1970, 92–98; Bhattacharji, 124–28). But there are also many stories depicting an eventual reconciliation to the conflict many have come

to expect (Gonda 1970, 95–104; Bhattacharji, 357ff.). One case of reconciliation occurs in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (5.32) after the two have battled to a standstill. They finally come to realize that they are truly "one," and give up their rivalry (also *Bhāg. Purāṇa* 10.62.2). In the *Kūrma Purāṇa* (1.5 and 5.42) we find a full-scale rapprochement between the two deities. The document extols Viṣṇu who then proceeds to appear and to praise Śiva.

According to tradition, the great philosopher Śaṅkara, committed to the proposition of unity, both theological and religious, attempted to synthesize the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava traditions. He is said to have invented what came to be known as Five-Form Worship (*Pañcāyatana Pūjā*), whereby five deities were to be worshipped together: two Śaiva (Śiva and Gaṇeśa), two Vaiṣṇava (Viṣṇu and Sūrya), and the goddess Durgā as an intermediary (Gonda 1962, 2:95).

This background is helpful when we consider the lay mythology of the Citrā Festival. In the account of the festival as a single event, both aspects of the relationship between Śiva and Viṣṇu are evident. On the one hand, Viṣṇu (as Aḷakar) and Śiva are allies: Viṣṇu intends to come to the wedding of Śiva and to participate in it. Viṣṇu's sister is marrying Śiva, and this is an alliance of no small consequence. But there is also conflict: the very event which attests to accord on one level, the marriage, is the occasion for conflict. The marriage is celebrated without Viṣṇu, and he becomes so angry that he will not even pay his respects to the new couple. Nor will he deign to enter the city limits over which the pair now rules. The ambivalence is here portrayed in terms of in-law tensions, and this fact is significant: this same in-law conflict does have a textual basis, even though there is nothing textual that suggests it in *Śiva's Sacred Games*.

In the Sanskrit mythologies dealing with Dakṣa's sacrifice, the theme of in-law hostility and tension appears clearly. In the mythology dealing with Dakṣa's sacrifice which I have discussed above Dakṣa is Śiva's father-in-law, but he abhors Śiva. Śiva's violent response to his father-in-law's snubs is more than a hint that the dislike is mutual. Further, it is clear that Dakṣa's preferences are Vaiṣṇava, for the sacrifice he sponsors either includes Viṣṇu (as opposed to Śiva) or is in unique honor of Viṣṇu.

This theme of in-law conflict coming to the fore on the occasion of a ceremonial event reappears in the account of marriage negotiations in the Sanskrit *Śiva Purāṇa* (III.8.1.to III 51.14; also *Brahm.*IV.38.1 to IV.56.16; Archer 1985, 61–69). Here, too, the conflict is abetted by indications of Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava hostility. The delicate negotiations in this particular marriage of Śiva can only be described as Byzantine. Briefly, the story line is as follows:

> Pārvatī's ascetic practices and her worship of Śiva finally become effective when Viṣṇu intercedes for her, convincing Śiva to marry her (III.23.31). After testing Pārvatī's steadfastness (III.75.13–18 and III.26.2–31) Śiva agrees to go through with what he calls this silly "earthly convention" of marriage (III.29.27–40). But it will not be that easy, unfortunately. Śiva's unpredictable nature cannot be suppressed: he appears at Pārvatī's genteel home

> and grossly insults her mother, Menā, who promptly vows that her daughter will never marry such a rascal (III.30.39; also *Brahm.* IV.40.81–92). The gods also become a bit worried about the marriage, but for different reasons. They recognize that Pārvatī's father, Himavat (the personification of the Himalaya mountains) is a valuable asset on earth with all his (its) jewels. But giving away such a marvelous gift as Pārvatī *willingly* to a deity will accrue so much merit that Himavat will be transported directly to heaven, thereby robbing the earth of Himalaya's jewels (III.31.1–8). They decide to plant doubts in Himavat's mind by casting a shadow of doubt on the character of the intended son-in-law. But in the *Śiva Purāṇa* nobody can disparage Śiva except Śiva himself. And so the gods convince Śiva to take the form of a Vaiṣṇava Brahmin who then appears before Himavat to insult and disparage the intended son-in-law in no uncertain terms. The plan works, and Himavat is convinced that there will be no marriage to this disgusting carrier of skulls and snakes. Śiva then sends emissaries to talk to his intended in-laws and to dissuade them from cancelling the wedding. Eventually the emissaries succeed in rearranging the de-arranged marriage and Himavat sends out a letter of betrothal. But Śiva then appears for the wedding in his fierce form, and when Menā sees him she vows to commit suicide and to kill her own daughter before this rogue becomes her daughter's husband. Śiva decides to stop playing games, appears in his beautiful form, Menā relents, and the marriage is, once again, rearranged. However: as the ceremony is underway, at one of the crucial points in the proceedings, each party to the alliance is required to recite the lineage from which s/he comes. Pārvatī has no problems, but Śiva cannot proceed: he is eternal and has no progenitors. Himavat, shocked, refuses to continue. But eventually he is talked out of his proud position, and he agrees reluctantly to proceed. Another problem develops: Brahmā, the officiating priest, becomes very interested in the beautiful bride-to-be. She so excites him that he ejaculates involuntarily in the middle of the ceremony. Furious at this breach of gentlemanly conduct, Śiva prepares to kill Brahmā then and there. Viṣṇu intercedes once more, takes Śiva aside and explains that it would not look good to kill the officiant at one's own wedding. Cooler heads prevail, and what, by now, seems like a routine crisis, is averted.

If we look at the lay myth of the Citrā Festival in light of the Sanskrit material dealing with Śiva's marriage and Dakṣa's sacrifice, we notice some significant similarities: common to all these accounts are in-law tensions, interdeity tensions, and unexpected but major twists and turns that stem from personal offenses. In the festival, Viṣṇu's anger hints of in-law tensions that appear in the accounts of Dakṣa's sacrifice and Śiva's marriage. It is also significant that the Citrā lay myth involves three different forms of Viṣṇu in the proceedings: one appears at the wedding in the Mīnākṣi Temple to facilitate the proceedings (Pavaḷakkaṉivāy Perumāḷ), one goes to the Vaigai River from inside the city to act as intermediary for Mīnākṣi (Kūṭal Aḷakar), and one expresses the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava hostility (Aḷakar). Similarly, in the wedding arrangements of the *Śiva Purāṇa* summarized above, Viṣṇu plays two of these roles while a Vaiṣṇava

Brahmin plays the third: Viṣṇu facilitates the actual proceedings by talking Śiva out of decapitating Brahmā. He also intercedes for Pārvatī to convince Śiva to marry her. And the Vaiṣṇava Brahmin stops the wedding arrangements momentarily by his lurid denunciations of Śiva.

On the face of it, the anger of Viṣṇu/Aḷakar in the Citrā lay myth is precipitated by an apparently simple mistake: he is misinformed of the wedding date and the wedding is celebrated without him. But when we see how crucially important these simple details become in the textual traditions, Viṣṇu's anger at the festival is more convincing. Compared with the loss of life which Dakṣa's slight to Śiva brings about, or with the impetuosity of both Menā and Himavat in their summary cancellations of the wedding, Viṣṇu's being offended seems mild in comparison.

Thus, seen in the context of the Sanskrit tradition, the lay mythology of the Madurai Citrā Festival seems much less "concocted" or "arbitrary" than it might at first appear. It draws upon several strands of earlier tradition in a creative way. The claim, therefore, that the Citrā Festival lay myth has "no canonical authority" (Francis, 285–86) may be true in the narrower sense that it has not appeared in a widely acclaimed literary work. But it has authority nevertheless, an authority based on other textual traditions and on the religious experience of the millions of Tamils who subscribe to it, and who participate in the festival.

The Festival and Dravidian Kinship Relations

In addition to the authority which Sanskrit texts lend to the Citrā Festival lay myth, anthropological data on kinship and marriage in India are revealing. In particular, they help to explain some of the differences we find between the southern, Tamil materials and those that appear in Sanskrit.[9]

While it is not always the case, most often the Sanskrit materials portray the in-law hostility (as well as the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava hostility, when it is dealt with in kinship terms) in terms of hostility between the son-in-law and his father-in-law. The story recounted above of Dakṣa's sacrifice is a good example. So are the tensions between Śiva and his father-in-law, Himavat, in the *Śiva Purāṇa*. But in the Tamil material, the tensions occur between two brothers-in-law: the groom and his wife's brother. This is best understood when we recognize that there is a difference between the preferences for whom one should marry in northern as opposed to southern India.

In general, the northern, Sanskritic, and Indo-Aryan marriage patterns can be described as "complex," while those of the south tend to be "elementary" (Lévi-Strauss 1969a, i–xxii and 435–36; also Dumont 1983). The difference, according to Lévi-Strauss, is that societies practicing elementary structures of kinship are much more prescriptive about whom one should marry. Marriage, in other words, is prescribed: one must marry a certain category of relative.

All of society is defined as relatives, and these relatives are divided into two categories: possible and prohibited spouses. Whom one should marry is more narrowly dictated. In complex structures of kinship, the kinship terminology primarily defines who is too close to marry. Outside this circle of relatives, one may marry whomever he or she prefers. Of course, there are other factors that help you decide how to make the choice, such as economic, geographic, or caste criteria. In the complex structures, marriage is a much more preferential issue: you need not marry a particular category of relative. Put simply, the elementary form dictates whom you *should* marry. The complex form dictates whom you should *not* marry.

While there is no absolutely elementary kinship structure, the Dravidian tendency to practice cross-cousin marriage falls in that category. Basically, it works this way: the preferred marriage is with one's matrilateral cross-cousin, that is, with one's mother's brother's daughter if you are male, or with one's father's sister's son if you are female (Beck 1972, 13ff.; Yalman, 152 and 181; David 1–8; Dumont 1957, 187–88; Gough, 837, 844–45).

One of the functions of marriage in the Hindu tradition is to forge alliances among families (Lévi-Strauss 1969a, 479–93; also above, chapter one, "Two Generalizations About Marriage in India"). This, says Karve (76–87), is true in India, both north and south. But the cross-cousin marriage system of southern India has the effect of reestablishing alliances formed in previous generations. When a person marries a cross-cousin, s/he marries someone to whom s/he is already related. A new alliance is not created; an old alliance is reaffirmed. Dumont puts it succinctly: "In fact, what we are accustomed to call cross-cousin marriage is nothing but the perfect formula for perpetuating the alliance relationship from one generation to the next, and so making the alliance an enduring institution" (1953, 38).

Cross-cousin marriage is not practiced in northern India. The emphasis there is on marrying outside the category of what English speakers would regard as consanguinal, or blood, relatives. In Bengal, for example, one's "shared-body" (*jñāti*) relatives, those whom one cannot marry because they are too closely related, extend at least to the father's father's father (Inden and Nicholas, 76–87). The closest possible alliance would be with one's third cousin, but in practice the prohibition tends to extend seven generations on the male side and five generations on the female side. The same general pattern is widely observed throughout northern India (Gupta, 46; Lewis, 161). Karve observes that this "Aryan system of marriage" was a system that sought to expand the alliance network as far as possible in order to create "a confederation of families allied by the ties of marriage" (85). The northern preferences for marriage, then, exclude those who are even remotely related. Marrying a first cousin in the north is unthinkable.

Given the differences between the elementary structures of kinship in the Dravidian south and the more complex, and more far-reaching structure of kinship in the north, I will argue that the relationship between brothers-in-law is more crucial in the south than it is in the north. The logic is as follows.

Where matrilateral cross-cousin marriage is predominant, as it is in the south, brothers have a claim on their sisters' children. From the point of view of the married male, this means that his wife's brother (his brother-in-law) has a legitimate claim on his children. In Sri Lanka, for example, the brother-in-law has the right to claim his sister's son for his own daughter in marriage. Similarly, he also has the right to claim his sister's daughter for his own son in marriage. Yalman (152) notes that while the brother-in-law may not always press this claim, the right he has to do so tends to make him an active partner in any discussions about whom his sister's children should marry. Thus, when it comes time for a man to make arrangements for the marriage of any of his children, he must make those arrangements, whatever they may be, with the advice and consent of his brother-in-law. A man's brother-in-law is therefore given remarkable power in determining the future of his (the man's) children, for marriage arrangements are a crucial statement of a family's social and ritual status in the community.

But it is even more complicated: in both northern and southern India, hypergamy is the ideal. A woman should marry a man whose social and ritual status is higher than that of her own family. When this occurs, it means that a man's wife's brother (his brother-in-law) is regarded as ritually and socially inferior (e.g., Gough, 841; Yalman, 180; Beck 1972, 255). In the south, this makes for an ambiguous relationship between a man and his brother-in-law. On the one hand, his brother-in-law is socially and ritually inferior. But this inferior has a right to determine in some part the marriage arrangements of his superior's children. That is, he has a right to help determine the ritual and social status of his brother-in-law's children.

In relation to his sister's husband, the brother-in-law of the North is both inferior *and* relatively powerless. The two qualities consign him to relative insignificance in the eyes of his sister's husband. In the south, this same brother-in-law is both inferior *and* the rightful exerciser of considerable power. This contradiction makes him much more difficult to deal with: he is not to be taken lightly:

> Wherever a simple method of direct or indirect exchange (of women) is practiced, the brothers-in-law relationship . . . has an importance characterized by an acute ambiguity. The brothers-in-law depend on one another in a truly vital way, and this mutual dependence can create alternatively, and sometimes also simultaneously, collaboration, confidence, and friendship, or else distrust, fear, and hate. [Lévi Strauss 1969a, 436]

It should not be surprising, then, that the bride's brother might occupy a preeminent ritual position in her marriage ceremony. In the future, it is with him, his new brother-in-law, that the groom will deal when the important decisions are made involving both sides of the family. So it is that in the south we find the bride's brother acting as the representative par excellence of her family when he gives her away in the marriage ceremony: Viṣṇu, Pārvatī's brother, gives her in marriage to Śiva.

This same logic can be used to understand why it is that the bride's father is the one with whom the groom must deal in northern India.[10] A daughter's marriage alliance reflects directly on the social and ritual status of the father. It is in his interest to find a groom who is ritually and socially superior. At the same time, the father of the bride is a respected elder to the groom. He is deserving of deference by virtue of his age and by virtue of the fact that he is giving away the most respected of gifts, a virgin, in marriage. The groom owes his father-in-law respect, but he is superior to his father-in-law in status. He is doing his father-in-law a significant favor: the acceptance of a woman in marriage is performed with condescension (Gough, 841; Saraswati, 62; Orenstein, 50; Inden and Nicholas, 32). A considerable amount of ambiguity is thus built into this relationship, too: in the earlier Sanskrit stories dealing with Śiva's relationships to his two fathers-in-law, we noted that Śiva expects, and rightfully so, deference and consideration from Dakṣa, and he flies into a rage when he does not receive it. Similarly, the relationship between Śiva and Himavat reflects this ambiguity in the "on-again, off-again" tenor of the marriage negotiations.

We can see, then, that in the northern and Sanskritic traditions, lineage alliances and tensions tend to be located in the relationship between father-in-law and son-in-law. When Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava alliances and tensions are portrayed in terms of lineage relationships, they tend to appear at this level. In the southern and Tamil traditions, lineage alliances and tensions are more often expressed in the relationship between brothers-in-law and, more specifically, between the husband and his wife's brother. Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava alliances and tensions are often portrayed at this level. Anthropological and kinship studies contribute to our understanding of why these trends have developed. In particular, they show that cross-cousin marriage practices of the south invest the brothers-in-law relationship with significantly more value than we find in the north.

The Perspective of the Center and the Role of the Female

So far, I have approached this material, particularly the mythology and the kinship dynamics, in a rather androcentric fashion: men have been viewed as the prime movers in lineage alliances, with the women literally caught in the middle, treated as gifts from one male to another. Lévi-Strauss, in particular, has analyzed kinship structures from this perspective: ". . . the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners between whom the exchange takes place" (1969a, 115). In addition, George Hart (1973 and 1974) has proposed that cross-cousin marriage in Tamilnadu serves a further male purpose. It is a particularly effective way of channeling a woman's *aṇaṅku*, that is, the sacred power with which a woman is invested. Again, the male perspective is clear: it is the males who stand to gain or lose when this power is either controlled or unleashed. The woman's marriage is manipu-

lated to this end, for only when she is properly married, and remains chaste within the bounds of that marriage, can her *aṇaṅku* become a positive, creative force. Paul Younger (1982) has articulated this state of affairs quite well:

> Compared to other cultures where a dominant male pattern is to be found, it might be thought that the family in this area of South India centered on the powerful female who is thought of as responsible for fertility and health and who has complex links with three families through her brother, husband, and sons. The Śaivas do not think of this as a dominant female pattern, however, but see the natural strength of the woman as something which needs to be cared for by the brother, cultivated by being directed to the service of the husband, and expressed in the accomplishments of the sons. [259]

There is another perspective: that of the woman. She stands in the center of the two male lineages which her marriage unites (in generalized, complex exchange) or reunites (in direct, elementary exchange). She has been described as the horizontal link between two vertical chains which are male descent lines (David, 8), or as the cement between two girders or beams (again, which are male descent lines) (Beck 1974, 20). The woman has this capacity to unite lineages by virtue of what actually happens to her in the Hindu understanding of marriage. At marriage, the substance of her body is literally transformed. She becomes the "half-body" of her husband, and is thus transformed into what Westerners would call a "blood relative" of her husband and of his "blood relatives" (Inden and Nicholas, i–xiv; also see Fruzzetti, 119ff.). There is a sense in which a woman is reborn on the occasion of her marriage. Indeed, a woman's marriage has been regarded as her second birth, equivalent in function to a man's initiation into the caste (Buhler, 25:2.67).

However, there are two exceptions to this general rule: a woman's body cannot be so transformed if the couple is completely unrelated, that is, if they are not of the same caste (Inden and Nicholas, 40). Nor does this transformation occur if the couple is already very closely related. Nur Yalman writes that,

> the reason why a marriage ceremony may be omitted among close kin is that structurally speaking nothing happens. The particular relationship is already in existence since it is implied by the kinship categories of the rest of the relatives and the cross-cousin rights and obligations. [172]

The cases in which such an understanding applies tend to be when a man claims his sister's daughter in marriage not for his son, but for himself. This turns out to be "the nearest equivalent to the marriage of the sister" (351). The husband in this case is *both* a mother's brother *and* a cross-cousin.

But these two exceptions are quite rare, the second likely only in southern India. Normally, marriage for the woman does effect the required transformation, enabling her to represent to each male lineage the interests of the other.

In practice, the woman serves as intermediary between the two lineages she

unites. The extent to which this is the case varies. In the north, a new bride is initially suspect in her new patrilocal confinement. She is alone and a stranger in her new surroundings: a fact imposed by the widespread custom of giving daughters in marriage to families from outside the village. She will not be fully accepted, if then, until she has given her husband a son. She is watched closely and disciplined severely by the women in her new family, but she still returns home from time to time. This visit often constitutes a welcome relief for her. In Bengal, the return to her natal village normally occurs at the annual Durgā Festival of the village, and at whatever other occasions, if any, her in-laws will permit.

Though this same pattern may apply in the south, particularly where cross-cousin marriage does not occur, Karve points out that the strains are much less severe on the new bride there. Often she knows the members of her new household intimately, and frequent trips to her natal home are not unusual (Karve, 219–21). It is customary, in fact, for a Tamil woman to return to her natal home for at least the delivery of the first child (Hart 1974, 38).

In both parts of India, then, the woman is the living representative of each lineage to the other in the marriage alliance. She literally moves back and forth between the lineages. In the northern areas, this movement back and forth is less frequent because the two lineages have less to share: their common interests concern primarily the woman whom they exchange. And there is a sense in which the two lineages are in competition over her loyalty. Thus, the dominant lineage, that into which she has married in a hypergamous structure, seeks to establish a monopoly on her by restricting her freedom to return to her natal family. Writing about her observations of this dynamic, Suzanne Hanchett notes that "the expressed feelings about sons-in-law and their families [is] something resembling fear—fear that parents [will] never see their daughters again" (55).

The freedom to move back and forth between the two lineages, particularly in the south, invests the woman with a certain amount of power. She may not exactly control the channels of informal communication between the two lineages, but a significant amount of it occurs through her. She has an intimate knowledge of the family dynamics in each lineage. This places her in a rather powerful position and contrasts sharply with the position of the bride of northern India. There the family of the new husband attempts to control the new daughter-in-law's visits to her natal home in order to wrest control of the informal communications network from her.

In the south, these restrictions on the inmarrying woman are unnecessary. Communications occur at other levels besides through her: ideally her father is her husband's mother's brother and her paternal grandfather is her husband's paternal grandmother's brother. The lineages have other points of contact besides that of the bride: there is less focus on her and therefore less need to control her because she does not have an exclusive control over communications. This is not to say that in the south the woman is not an important communica-

tions link between lineages. It is to say, rather, that her power is much less threatening to the alliance than it would be if she had exclusive control over the exchange of information between the lineages. In the north, a preemptory visit to her father's home by a new bride can be interpreted by sensitive in-laws as the unilateral initiation of divorce proceedings. And her failure to return would constitute a summary, unilateral severing of the alliance between the lineages.

In the south a new bride's visit home would not be so threatening. Failure to return to her husband would be more easily accepted, particularly if she were willing to bear him a son or two. And negotiations about the fragile marriage could continue through the parents, two of whom are siblings, or through the grandparents, two of whom, again, are siblings.

The Central Goddess between Peripheral Gods

Returning to the Citrā Festival once again, it is easier now to understand why the goddess Mīnākṣi plays such a crucial role in the celebration and in the lay myth. In one sense she is able to transcend the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava distinction. Just as the southern bride is able to move back and forth easily between the two lineages whose alliance her marriage symbolizes and effects, so Mīnākṣi, during the Citrā Festival, stands at the center of the temporary ritual alliance between Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas which the festival and the sacred marriage represent.

The context of the southern kinship structure lends reality to the mythology which declares that Mīnākṣi is Viṣṇu's sister and Śiva's wife. For those concerned about the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava distinctions, the lay mythology, coupled with common understandings about marriage and kinship dynamics, explain how this distinction can be submerged temporarily.

Mīnākṣi's predominance in the temple invests both the shrine and the city with significance for Vaiṣṇavas as well as Śaivas. Because she is regarded as the sister of Viṣṇu she is the legitimate recipient of Vaiṣṇava worship. Indeed, several of the Vaiṣṇavas with whom I spoke during the festival about their participation in it acknowledged an allegiance to Mīnākṣi but not to Śiva: among the Vaiṣṇava, rural devotees of Aḷakar, several are "god dancers" (*kōṭaṅki* or *cāmiyāṭi*). On the night before Aḷakar's descent into the Vaigai River, they are particularly active: at that time, possession by a deity, often induced by rituals of self-flagellation, is common (K. N. Radhakrishnan, 269–72). C. G. Diehl (177, note 4) notes that the one occasion when these "god dancers" enter the Mīnākṣi Temple is the Citrā Festival. They are allowed by temple officials into the temple only as far as the goddess's sleeping chamber.

As the presiding deity of the sacred city, then, Mīnākṣi attracts both deities and mortals to it, and to herself. From the nearby town of Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam, the third major religious shrine in the Madurai area (the other two being

Aḷakarkōvil and Madurai), come the Śaiva deity Skanda and the Vaiṣṇava deity Pavaḷakkaṉivāy Perumāḷ. And both of these deities, with their company of priests and devotees, are actually present during the marriage ceremony in the temple. One of the more impressive examples of mutual participation by Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas together in the festival occurs on the day after the wedding and the day before Viṣṇu enters the Vaigai River. This is the Cart Festival, at which time devotees from both sects accompany the newly married divine couple around all four Māci Streets.

In addition to the reverence that Vaiṣṇavas show for Mīnākṣi in her temple as well as during the Wedding Festival processions, Śaivas also participate in the honors reserved for Viṣṇu when he comes to Madurai. On that occasion thousands of Śaivas gather to greet Viṣṇu when he descends into the Vaigai Riverbed. When I asked one Śaiva about his coming to greet Viṣṇu, he said he felt it was a matter of courtesy to welcome the Vaiṣṇava deity to his city. Other Śaivas simply had no answer when I inquired why they paid respects to Viṣṇu. For many, it was simply a significant public event, something to be seen. Many looked at me as though my question were a very stupid one. In one sense it was: sacred power is sacred power. One taps it regardless of its source.

This mutual participation of both communities in the festival has not gone unnoticed by other observers. Writing about the Madurai Citrā Festival in the early 1900s, J. P. Jones observed, "Thus, upon this occasion we find the three cults of that region, Saivism, Vaiṣṇavism, and demonolatry most strikingly brought together" (*ERE* 8:240). Since his writing, it has become clear that the "demonolatry" of which he speaks constitutes the spells of possession of the "god dancers," whose allegiance to Viṣṇu would make them Vaiṣṇava. Another writer has noted that one of the unique things about Madurai is the way it celebrates this festival as a sign of unity between Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas (Nārāyaṇan Cettiyār, 10).

It is tempting, however, to overemphasize the neatness this explanation offers. What about the large number of lay devotees from the outlying villages and from the city for whom the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava distinction is irrelevant? Louis Renou puts it this way:

> It has been found that 80 per cent of the religious believers in southern India are devotees of the *grāma devatās* ("village deities"); and that a great number of people are Hindus in name only, and cannot even tell the census agents whether they are Vaiṣṇavas or Śaivas. [52]

Both C. G. Diehl (39) and Louis Dumont (1959a, 85) would probably agree with this assessment. They have shown, in different contexts, that the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava distinction is one primarily observed by the Brahmin minority of the Madurai area. Henry Whitehead has observed that for the rural Tamils "Śiva and Viṣṇu may be more dignified beings, but the village deity is regarded as

a more present help in the time of trouble and is more intimately concerned with the happiness and prosperity of the villagers . . . . " (16–17).

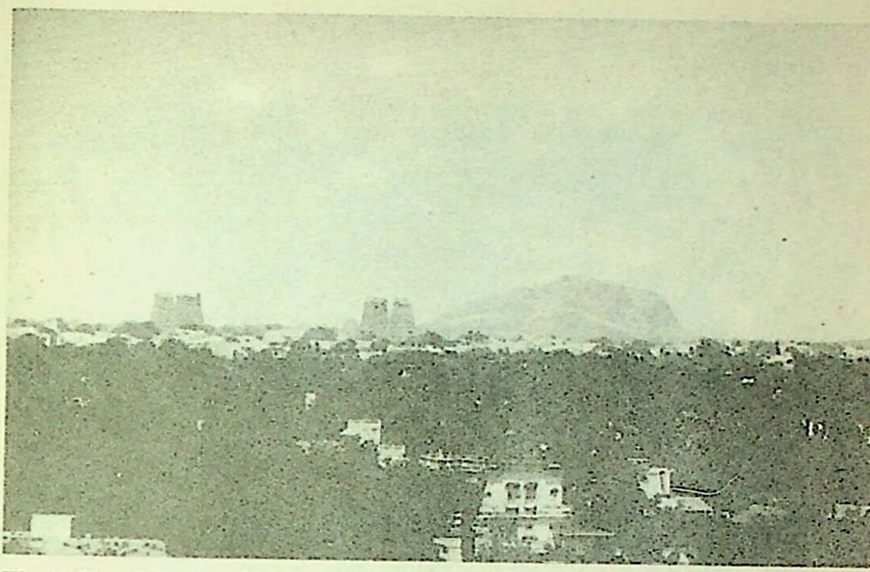
For most devotees, then, participation in the Citrā Festival is not so much mandated by Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava affiliations. It is, rather, a function of their devotion to the goddess Mīnākṣī as a topocosmic deity: she is a local goddess whose dominion over the Madurai area justifies, indeed requires, their devotion. That she should be the sister and wife of purer Brahmanic deities than they are accustomed to worshipping is icing on the cake. It adds to her legitimacy but does not constitute, in itself, sufficient reason for the unusual treatment she receives. She is the Goddess of the City. That, for most devotees, is quite enough.



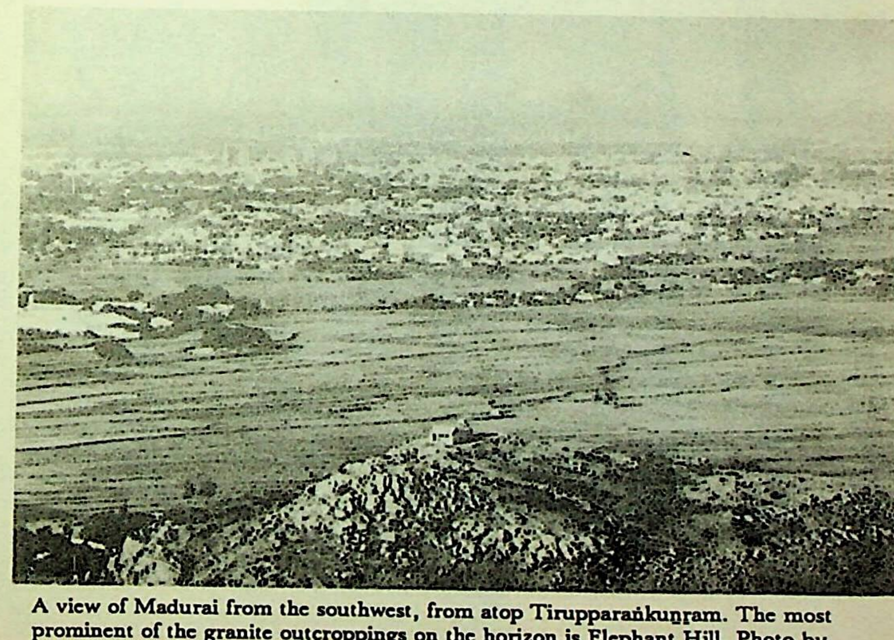
The birth of the Goddess Mīnākṣī from the sacrificial fire as depicted on one of the Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvara temple fresco illustrations of *The Story of Śiva's Sacred Games*. Mīnākṣī is frequently represented holding a parrot. Photo by Dennis Hudson.



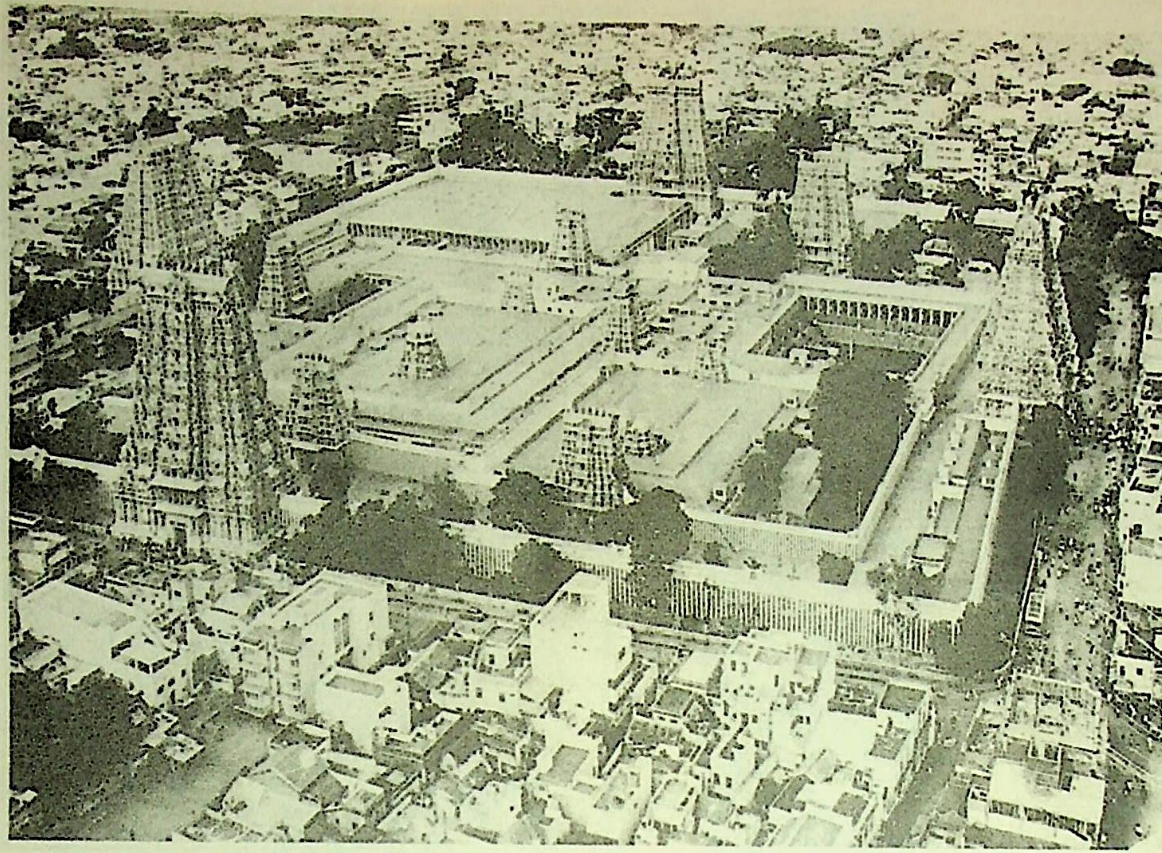
One version of the famous sculptural representation of the "water-pouring ceremony" during the marriage of Mīnākṣī and Sundareśvara. Viṣṇu, on the left, pours water over the hands of Sundareśvara, on the right, and Mīnākṣī, in the middle. Photo by W. Harman.



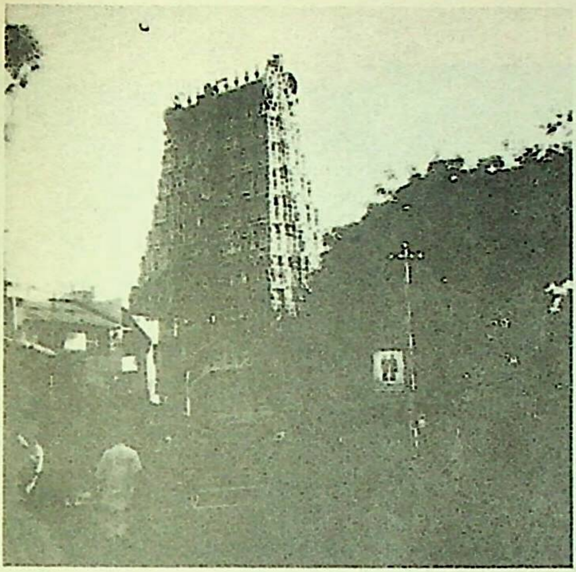
The skyline of the city of Madurai as seen from the northeast. Madurai Municipal code forbids construction of any building higher than the four temple towers. The granite outcropping on the horizon is Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam, which lies about six miles from the temple. Photo by W. Harman.



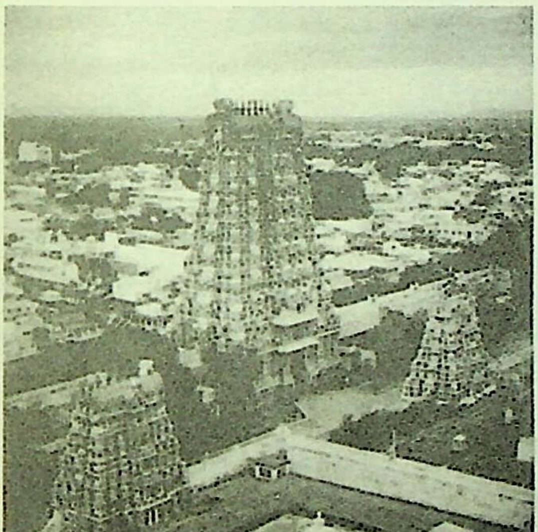
A view of Madurai from the southwest, from atop Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam. The most prominent of the granite outcroppings on the horizon is Elephant Hill. Photo by W. Harman.



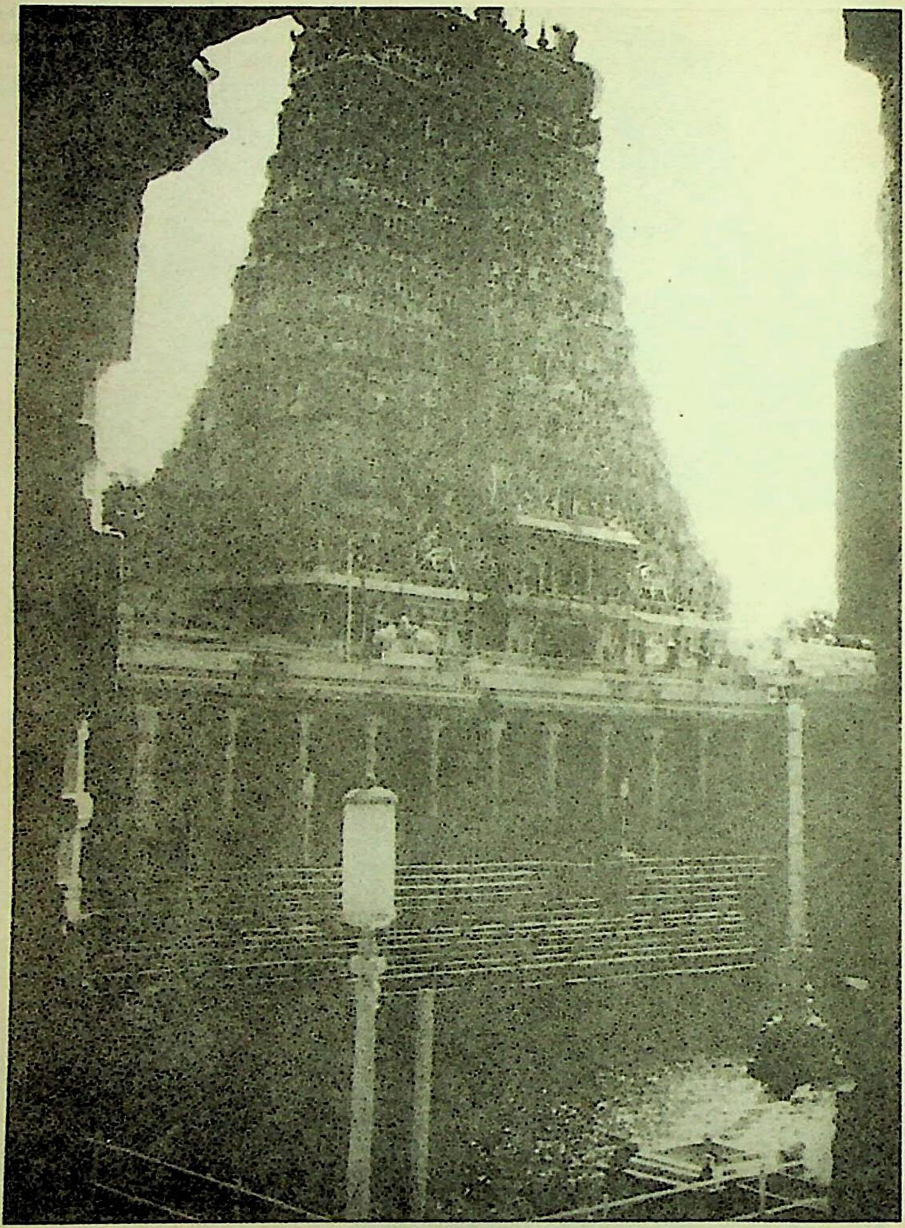
An aerial view of the Mīnākṣi-Sundareśvara Temple complex from the southwest. The outer walls of the temple enclose an area of approximately fourteen acres. Photo by David Christopher.



The Eastern Tower of the M-S Temple, approached from "Road to River." Each of the towers is profusely decorated with painted statuary of Hindu mythological figures. Photo by W. Harman.



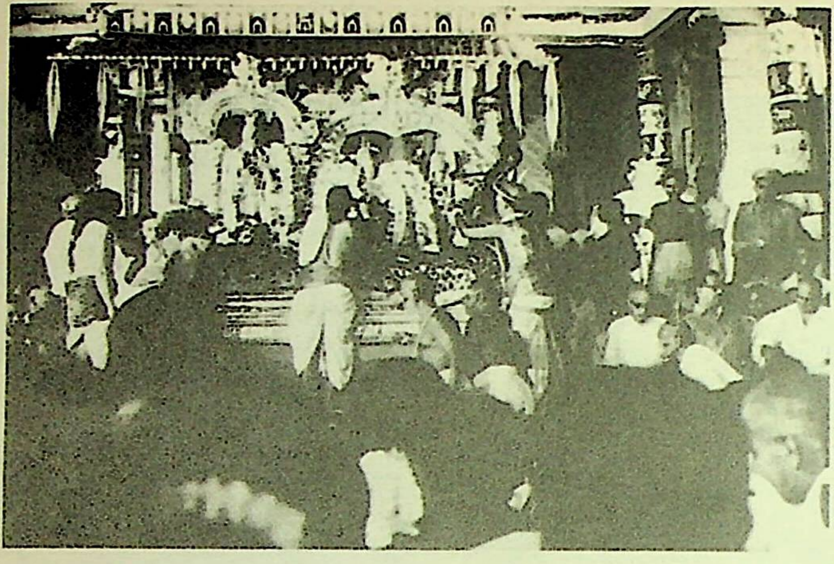
A view of the Western Tower of the M-S Temple from atop the Southern Tower. In the foreground is the roof and cupola over the sanctum of the Goddess Mīnākṣī. Photo by Dennis Hudson.



A view of the Southern Tower and of the Golden Lily Tank encircled by a pillared corridor with its walls decorated by illustrations of the complete *Story of Śiva's Sacred Games*. Photo by Dennis Hudson.



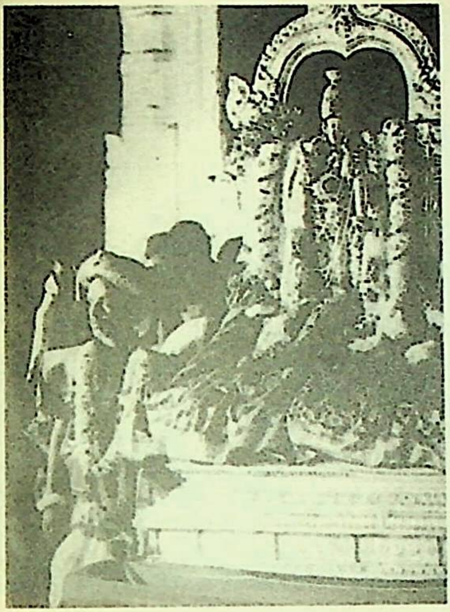
One of the four corridors surrounding the Golden Lily Tank, with ceiling paintings and illustrations of episodes from *Śiva's Sacred Games*. Photo by Dennis Hudson.



The marriage ceremony of Mīnākṣi and Sundareśvara inside the temple. The three images are, from left to right, the Goddess Mīnākṣi standing alone, and the combined bridal pair, Sundareśvara and Mīnākṣi. Priests are performing the thread-tying ceremony on the bridal couple as devotees watch. Photo by Franklin Presler.



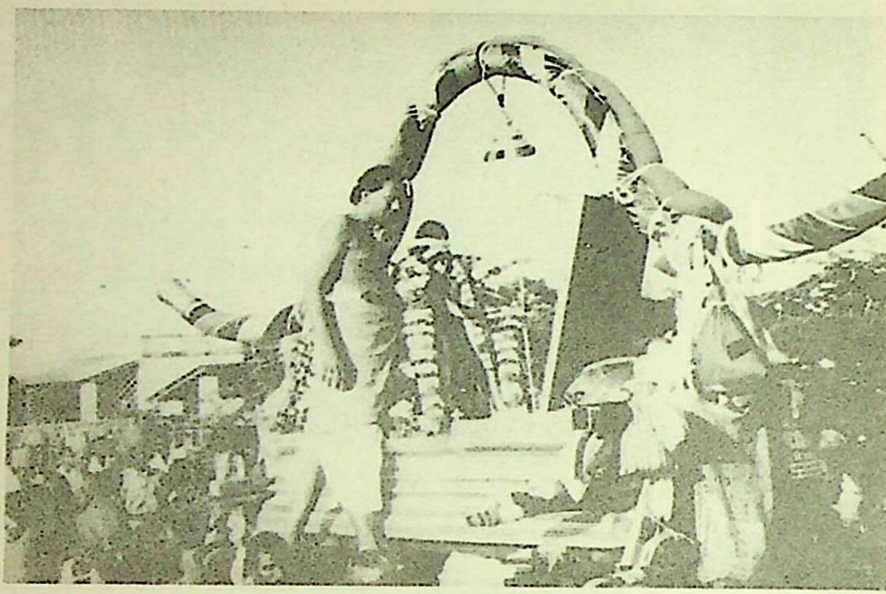
The priest who acts as Sundareśvara in the wedding ceremony. Photo by Franklin Presler.



The priest who acts as the Goddess Mīnākṣī in the wedding ceremony. Photo by Franklin Presler.



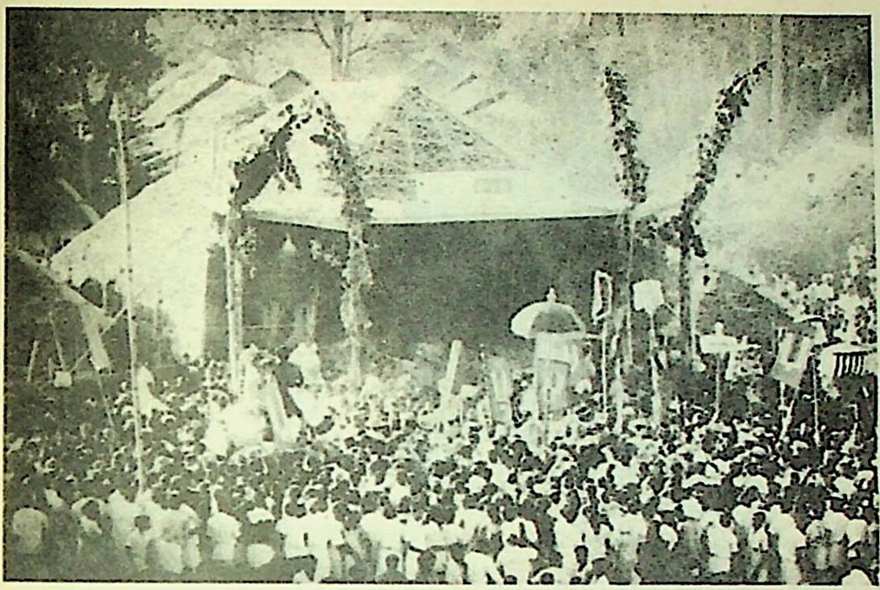
Images of the bridal couple as they receive well-wishers immediately following the ceremony. The larger image is that of Sundareśvara. Photo by Franklin Presler.



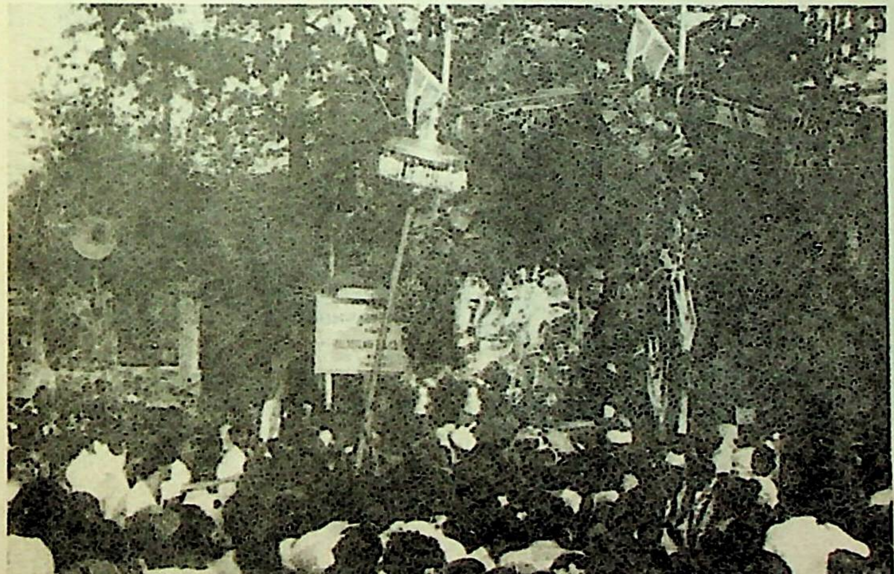
Viṣṇu (as Aḷkar) arrives at the outer limits of Madurai after the long pilgrimage journey from Aḷakarkōvil. The image of the deity, dressed in the dark turban and traditional garb of a local caste group, is carried, along with an attending priest, atop a palanquin. Photo by Leonard Dart.



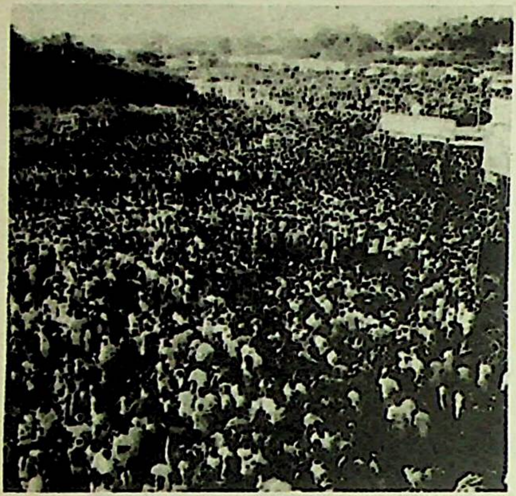
The image of Viṣṇu, now riding atop a golden horse palanquin, encounters an enthusiastic reception near the Vaigai Riverbed. Photo by Leonard Dart.



Viṣṇu approaches one of many temporarily erected pavilions along the path from Aḷakarkōvil to Madurai, where he and his retinue will rest momentarily and receive appropriate offerings from the sponsors of the pavilion. Photo by Leonard Dart.



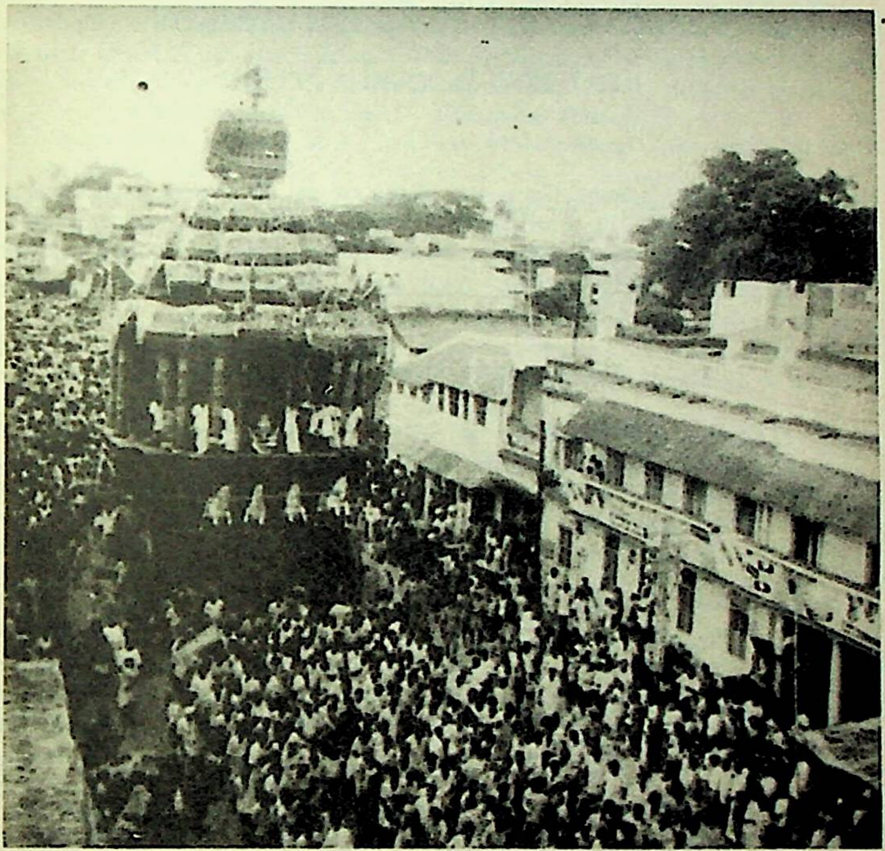
Viṣṇu departs from one of the temporary pavilions. During the rest of the year, this building serves as a police station. Photo by James Lindholm.



Early morning crowds gather in the dry bed of the Vaigai River to view the auspicious arrival of Viṣṇu at the pavilion in the upper right. There he will meet Kūṭal Aḻakar, a deity whose image is brought to the pavilion from a Vaiṣṇava temple inside the city. Photo by W. Harman.



One of many devotees who wear ritual clothing and take special vows to accompany Viṣṇu on the journey to Madurai. This man has just filled a water bag, and will use it to squirt festival-goers. Photo by Dennis Hudson.



The Cart Festival on West Masi Street. After their wedding, Mīnākṣī and Sundareśvara do a "tour of the town": their images are placed inside large carts which are then pulled with thick ropes through the streets by devotees. Photo by W. Harman.

V.

What Marriage Does

Deification, Transformation, and the Social Order

In *The Story of Śiva's Sacred Games* and in the annual Citrā wedding festival of the Madurai temple, the marriage of Mīnākṣī with Śiva is a crucial religious event. In form and in function it seems to supplant the classic occasion in the Hindu tradition when humans and deities meet. That occasion is the sacrifice.

Marriage as an Antidote to Sacrifice

Śiva's marriage to Mīnākṣī is, like the ancient Vedic sacrifice, a religious event, a moment when mortals and deities interact. At the wedding assembly, deities are purified and humans are transformed by virtue of their contact with Śiva and Mīnākṣī. There are, of course, the elaborate marriage rituals, religious by virtue of the fact that many are prescribed by sacred Sanskrit texts: of the rituals described in *TVP* I.5.176–88, the only one not traceable to *Gṛhyasūtra* sources is the *tāli*-tying ceremony (Pandey, 153–234). There are the straightforward references to marriage as a religious sacrifice (*Taittirīya* II.2.2.6), and to those who are unmarried as being those "without sacrifice" (Pandey, 152–54). One of the most important defining features of one form of marriage, the *daiva*, is the simultaneous celebration of a sacrifice (*Āśvalāyana Gṛhya Sūtra* 1.5.1–3 in deBary, I:225).

But Indian literary tradition is rich with analogies, homologies, and metaphors: the assertion that marriage *is* a sacrifice, or even resembles a sacrifice, cannot be all that revealing, since so much else is portrayed as equivalent to sacrifice: war, sex, work, study, and yoga, to name a few (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 6.2.13. in R. E. Hume; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 6.12.13 and 6.4.3 cited in O'Flaherty 1980, 13; *Bhagavad Gītā* IV.27–34).

What is striking in *Śiva's Sacred Games* is the way the marriage of Madurai not only resembles sacrifice: it supplants the sacrifice as an even more efficacious religious event. The description of the marriage ceremony in the text recalls the celebration of a sacrifice in many particulars. The Tamil word for "sacrifice," *vēḷvi*, is consistently used here to mean "marriage" (e.g., I.5.64, 67, 175, 185). The description of how the marriage hall is laid out resembles the laying out of the sacrificial altar: it is done "by relying on the ancient Vedic

treatises": the boundaries of the marriage hall are first established, the seat on which the married couple will sit is called "the sacrificial altar" (*vēti*), and a large covering is constructed over the area, a covering referred to as a "temple" (I.5.67–69). And while the introductory sections of the document detailing the benefits of living in and participating in Madurai's religious life tend toward hyperbole, it is significant that the text equates participation in Madurai's religious life with the merit gained from performing the horse sacrifice, the drink of strength sacrifice, the sin-removing sacrifice, the fire-offering sacrifice, and the royal consecration sacrifice (I. *Talaivicēṭap Paṭalam*, 9).

More pertinent, perhaps, is the fact that in *Śiva's Sacred Games* sacrifices that are performed tend either to go wrong or to be evil instruments used by self-seeking Jains to destroy the city of Madurai. Regarding unsuccessful sacrifices, we have already seen in chapter three how the sacrifices of King Malayadhvaja Pāṇḍya tend not to bring about their intended results. He wanted a male child as his successor, but his ninety-nine horse sacrifices to that end failed.. The sacrifices did manage to precipitate the jealousy of Indra, who feared the accumulating merit such activity bestows on the sacrificer. And this tension between Indra and the Pāṇḍya kings, first introduced here, continues to plague the Pāṇḍyas, almost as a leitmotif in the text.[1]

Later in the story, King Ugra Pāṇḍya, the first son of Śiva and Mīnākṣī and their royal successor, again arouses Indra's jealousy by sponsoring numerous sacrifices. In this, "The Chapter in Which a Spear Is Thrown to Dry Up the Sea" (I.13.), Indra tries to put an end to the upstart Pāṇḍya dynasty, but he works by proxy: he incites Varuṇa to destroy the city under a flood. Varuṇa fails, however, as Ugra uses a spear given him by his father to turn back the seven seas.

All this is not to say that sacrifices are bad. Not at all: kings are supposed to sacrifice. Even in the text, when King Kulabhūṣaṇa Pāṇḍya does not sacrifice and give gifts to Brahmins, the result is devastating drought and misery. Only Śiva's intervention is able to change things (II.31.1–19). And at the very beginning of the document, we find in the praise section:

> Long live the just rule of the king who
> causes the Vedic Śaiva religion to prosper,
> brings happiness to his subjects,
> spreads *dharma* throughout the land,
> causes wealth everywhere to increase,
> makes rain to flow abundantly from the clouds,
> and celebrates sacrifices according to the Vedas.
> [I. *Vāḻttu*, 1]

Sacrificing is not wrong, so long as those who sacrifice do not offer the sacrifices to themselves or sacrifice too much (Gonda 1966, 15ff.; O'Flaherty 1976, 347–48). And in our text the sacrifices of Malayadhvaja and Ugra are efficacious, inasmuch as they increase these kings' powers. But the sacrifices

also entail divine enmity, jealousy, and ultimate danger. Sacrifices are sources of genuine power, but there are unpredictable and dangerous consequences involved in the accumulation of power.

Were it not for the intervention of Śiva on behalf of the Pāṇḍya dynasty, the conflicts with Indra and his proxy Varuṇa might have gone differently. It was Śiva who gave his son Ugra the three implements specifically to ward off imminent possible dangers to the kingdom: the discus used against Indra, the spear used against Varuṇa, and a ball used to hit Mount Meru (I.12.63).

It might be argued that the sacrifice from which the three-year-old Mīnākṣī emerged was surely a blessing. But it did go awry: it was intended to produce a son rather than a deformed, three-breasted daughter. Here, again, Śiva saves the day by his prophetic appearance, and, eventually, by his marriage to her.

If the sacrifices by Pāṇḍya royalty effect ambiguous results at best, those of the scheming Jains effect unmitigated evil (see also O'Flaherty 1976, 86–87, 98–102). This happens three times in the text. In each case the Jains celebrate a sacrifice with the explicit intent of destroying Madurai. In "The Chapter in Which an Elephant Is Shot with an Arrow" (II.22) a Cōḷa King who has converted to Jainism commissions Jain priests to destroy Madurai. From the priests' sacrifice emerges a giant rutting elephant which they direct to devastate the city ruled by King Vikrama Pāṇḍya. At the king's prayerful request, however, Śiva intervenes in the form of a hunter, and kills the elephant. In "The Chapter in Which a Snake Is Shot with an Arrow" (II.28), King Anantaguṇa Pāṇḍya is the object of Jain hatred. From a second Jain sacrifice a demon emerges which takes the form of a giant venomous serpent and sets out to destroy the Madurai king and his kingdom. This time, the king himself kills the serpent: when more conventional methods fail, he finally prays to Śiva and receives a special arrow with which he kills the monster. The Jains try a third ploy in "The Chapter in Which a Love-Struck Cow Is Tormented" (II.29). Wiser by virtue of two previous defeats, they produce from their sacrifice a vicious demon that takes the form of a beautiful cow. The reasoning is that because Hindus hold cows in reverence, neither the Pāṇḍyas nor Śiva will dare to kill this one. Again the monster advances on Madurai. But again Śiva foils the plan. He sends his trusty bull servant Nandin to meet the cow. Nandin manhandles her a bit, then appears before her as a very alluring suitor. The poor cow is literally love-struck, then faints and dies on the spot.

We can see that when sacrifices are used in *Śiva's Sacred Games*, their results are neither predictable nor necessarily good. What is predictable and necessarily good is the assurance that Śiva will intervene when things get out of hand or when unusual dangers threaten the Pāṇḍya royalty and city. Interestingly, the Jains seem more adept at sacrifice than do the Pāṇḍya kings. The Jains, at least, get what they want when they sacrifice. That what they want (the elephant, snake, and cow demons) do not accomplish what the Jains intend to accomplish is due only to Śiva's intervention. That the Pāṇḍyas do, eventual-

ly, get what they want despite sacrificial problems is also due to Śiva's intervention. In this unpredictable cosmos where experimentation in sacrificial ritual is one way to intervene in the normal course of events, there is an independent variable: it is Śiva's unwavering concern for the fate of Madurai, its rulers, and its people. And this protective presence cannot be attributed to any sacrifice. Rather, it is the result of another kind of religious event: Śiva's marriage to Mīnākṣi.

Women as Goddesses/Goddesses as Women: The Fluid Nature of Divinity

When marriage occurs, it is an occasion for communion between humans and deities, a time when differences between the two can be—and are—minimized. The text itself is explicit on this point: "Humans and deities: together they stood enthralled, side by side, no differences among them, having viewed the wedding that relieves all suffering...." (I.5.191). Similarly, the marriage ritual as it is enacted today in the temple—when human priests play the roles of the god and goddess, and during which humans and deities (the latter in the forms of their moveable images) attend the marriage together—constitutes an explicit occasion for communion. And if the marriage of deities can be seen as a particularly auspicious occasion for divine revelation, it can be seen as even more: it is a time when the distinctions between the human and the divine are blurred. I have mentioned this issue earlier in chapter one, showing how Indian art, children's games, and common folklore affirm the notion that the human-divine continuum is not only a gradual one: often we may not be able to tell whether the form standing before us is human or divine.[2] Literary examples of this notion are common. Take, for instance, the following verses about Madurai women, excerpted from an unspecified portion of the *Maturaik Kalampakam* of Kumarakuruparacuvāmikaḷ and appearing at the beginning of the 1970 published program of the Madurai Citrā Festival:

> You gave birth to the entire universe surrounded by the seas and assumed the name Goddess Taṭātakai.
> You, Śiva, the Incomparable One, took on the name of the beautiful Pāṇḍya monarch.
> Why all this, and why did Kumaravēl take the name Ugra Pāṇḍya?
> It was because the three of You shared together Your enjoyment of cool, sweet Tamil.
> And so, who can possibly comprehend the greatness of Tamil?
> Bees making music melodious as the yāḷ,
> flowers dripping with honey, worn by ladies in the courtyard enclosed by roofs made of pearl:
> there women of the Tamil land play and sing
> as would heavenly goddesses
> whose eyes do not blink.

Gods who saw them wondered: "Are these women human or divine?"
All this is the greatness of Madurai
where You, Lord Śiva, wear the serpent in Your hair.

What concerns me here is that the fluid nature of the human-divine distinction is particularly explicit in the context of marriage. The fluidity is expressed in many ways. For one, we have seen that the experience of viewing the sacred marriage of Śiva and Mīnākṣi was sufficient to transform humans into deities. And in the aftermath of the wedding, when Śiva is persuaded to appear before the wedding guests as the cosmic dancer, mortals receive their second opportunity for divine transformation. In "The Chapter of the Holy Dance in the Silver Courtyard" (I.6.1–28), two sages refuse to take their places at the wedding feast without first witnessing Śiva's great dance. When the dance concludes, Śiva grants the desire of one of the sages:

This is the wish of the sage Patañjali:
"O Lord, You Who are the beginning of all things,
the personification of the finite and the infinite,
may all those who have witnessed this saving dance
of supreme bliss,
obtain that indescribable state which is an end
to rebirth in this world."
So the sage asked as he bowed,
and the Lord immediately granted the request.
[I.6.25]

And the text makes it clear that among the sages (*muni*) heavenly singers (*gandharva*), gods (*vāṉōr*), celestials (*avuṇar*), and silent ascetics (*mauṉayōkār*), there were mortals as well in the wedding crowd (I.6.18). These mortals, then, have achieved release (*mukti*) from mortal limits by virtue of their presence at and participation in the wedding events.

Another instance of the fluid nature of the human-divine distinction focuses our attention squarely on the nature of the female in the marriage of Śiva and Mīnākṣi. Is Mīnākṣi human or is she a deity? Elsewhere, the issue is raised in relation to Pārvati when she marries Śiva in the Sanskrit *Purāṇas*. In her analysis of the Sanskrit material, Wendy O'Flaherty takes the position that Pārvati's mortal status is constituted by her devoted, worshipful attitude toward Śiva (1980, 91–93). But on this point, I would disagree: the texts are comfortable with having deities worship each other. For example, in the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* I.6.16, Śiva worships Viṣṇu. Deities can act like devotees—indeed they can be devotees of other deities—without necessarily compromising their own divinity. In the case of Mīṇākṣi the text does not really worry about the issue. Mīnākṣi is *both* the daughter of King Malayadhvaja Pāṇḍya *and* the incarnation of Pārvati, the divine consort of Śiva. The position is clear, for example, in the "Praise of Deities" section:

She assumed a form identical to Śiva,
 a form even Brahmā cannot comprehend.
She, Who gives birth to all things
 in innumerable worlds here and afar,
  who has firm breasts,
   and black hair adorned with honeylike flowers
    is the Lady with eyes like a fish,
    is the One Who assumed the form of a Daughter
     to the Pāṇḍyas,
    is the One Whose flowerlike feet
      you must cherish forever in your heart.
       [I.*Kaṭavuḷ Vāḻttu* 8,"*Aṅkayaṟkaṇṇammai*"]

The writer of our text, of course, has the advantage of viewing the issue retrospectively: the goddess, who is Mīnākṣi, was also Taṭātakai, the royal and human daughter. And, if forced to take a position, he would have to insist on her divinity. She is, after all, praised in the "Praise of Deities" (*Kaṭavuḷ Vāḻttu*) section of the work. But forcing the tradition into an "either/or" position would do it violence, at least on this issue.

I would suggest that any preoccupation with the question is a function of the Western Judaeo-Christian and Greek insistence on a radical distinction between the human and the divine. The preoccupation, in the Judaic context, might best be exemplified by the dismay attributed to his Jewish contemporaries which Jesus' claim to divinity aroused (e.g., Matthew 9:3, 26:65; John 10:36). And it was later demonstrated in the variety of attempts by Nestorians, Gnostics, Docetists, and Monophysites to sort out the problem of whether Jesus was all human, all divine, various alternating proportions of each, or whether he had, at some point, been transformed from human into divine (See Chadwick, 192–213; Bultmann, 128–33). That such controversies are rarely found in the Hindu tradition—and that no such definitive pronouncements resembling those of the Council of Chalcedon are required—bespeaks the greater comfort among Hindus with what I shall call "human-divine fluidity." The simultaneous coexistence of undivided human and divine attributes in a single figure seem to pose no significant problem for theologians in the Hindu tradition. But for Western, Judaeo-Christian theologians, it had to be regarded as a "stumbling block," a "scandal of particularity," or, more simply, a mystery to be taken on faith (Bultmann, 129ff.).

In *Śiva's Sacred Games* the goddess Mīnākṣi is not the only example of women who are able to exhibit divine attributes in the context of marriage. Perhaps the most clear-cut instance occurs in "The Chapter in Which [the Forms of] an Old Man, a Handsome Young Man, and a Child Are Assumed" (II.23).The woman in question is named Gaurī, the daughter of a Śaiva Brahmin couple, Virūpākṣa and his wife Suratā. Like the royal parents of Mīnākṣi, Gaurī's parents were once childless. They finally had her as a result of special devotions to the Seven Mothers. Gaurī turns out to be no ordinary child, however.

Her strong devotional predilections are first revealed when, at the age of five, she questions her father about how she may stop the cycle of rebirths. Her father also displays certain eccentricities, though his are not quite so laudable as those of his daughter. One day, on a whim, he decides to give his daughter in marriage to a young Vaiṣṇava mendicant from another town. He does so by performing the water-pouring ceremony then and there, without consulting his wife or his other relatives. The ceremony itself, however, seals the marriage, and so there is no possibility of reneging on the symbolic promise. The writer of our text interrupts his narrative at this point to express unqualified disapproval:

> Without consideration of family, knowledge of lineage,
> or regard to qualities and customs of family nobility,
> unconcerned with issues of education and culture,
> this man, who knew the proper traditions,
> still made a gift of his own daughter
> by the water-pouring rite,
> thereby doing violence
> to accepted rules and customs.
> [I.23.10]

But what is done is done: Gaurī is married to the young man and sent off to live with him and his relatives: a lone, devoted Śaiva in the midst of hostile Vaiṣṇavas. The fact that she insists on wearing Śaiva symbols and, in particular, the Śaiva ash on her forehead, does not endear her to her new family. She is for them a source of embarrassment, and so they leave her at home, locked inside, when they go one day to a marriage—Vaiṣṇava, of course—in another town. Śiva takes pity on his ardent devotee, for she does not denounce her tradition in the face of her relatives' demands. He appears to her miraculously, penetrating the locked house, in the form of an aged Śaiva mendicant. She receives him with joy and feeds him, for he appears too weak even to put the food in his own mouth. As she touches him, he is transformed, to her surprise, into a very handsome young man. Once more, the ascetic-to-erotic transformation appears in the text: sacred ash becomes fragrant sandalwood paste, Śaiva rosary beads become golden ornaments, and the hunchbacked old ascetic becomes an alluring young man (II.23.26; also see I.5.194). At that moment, though, Gaurī's relatives return from the wedding. Śiva immediately assumes a third transformation, that of a child with Śaiva markings, thus avoiding Gaurī's being caught in a compromising situation. While she lies convincingly about where the child came from, her angry mother-in-law banishes her from the house. The thought that Gaurī has had contact with other Śaivas, if only to babysit for them, is too much for the Vaiṣṇava parents-in-law. As she leaves the house, babe in arms, Śiva appears in the sky. The entire town is flabbergasted as the baby disappears and Gaurī is transfigured, becoming the wife of Śiva, rising in the sky to assume a position be-

side her lord on his vehicle, the bull Nandin. The mortal woman Gaurī has become the goddess Pārvatī and Śiva's wife.

Of particular interest in this episode is the theme of the woman who is wronged and who, by virtue of the injustice, achieves supernatural powers.[3] Gaurī is wrongly married to a Vaiṣṇava and is wrongly treated by her Vaiṣṇava in-laws. However, the divine status she achieves is not manifest in vindictive powers of destruction, as is the case with certain other deified females in Hindu folk traditions. She does not become independent, fierce, or a seeker of revenge, for only as the passive, long-suffering, and submissive woman can she, or any other woman for that matter, become the wife of Śiva (Babb).

A second example of a woman whose marriage is a source of great pain and ill-treatment occurs in "The Chapter in Which [the Presence of] the Vaṉṉi Tree, the Well, and the Liṅga Is Invoked" (III.64). Here we encounter a familiar pattern: a childless man must somehow gain a male heir by adoption, religious observances, or marrying his female child to a young man who thereby becomes his son-in-law (*TVP* I.4.1–20; II.23.1–4; II.39.1–4; and III.57.20–26). In this case a merchant and his wife who live to the west of Madurai are childless. Finally, they have a little girl as a result of the religious merit accrued from giving gifts to mendicants. The merchant decides that he will follow rigorously the prescribed formula for cross-cousin marriage. He pledges to give his daughter in marriage to his sister's only son, even though that son already has one wife. But the merchant and his wife both die suddenly, leaving the task of arranging the marriage to other relatives. The deceased merchant's nephew is summoned from Madurai to take his intended second wife home, and to marry her there properly. On the way back to Madurai the two stop to rest for the night at Tiruppuṟampayam, where the young man suffers a fatal snake bite. But Śiva's renowned devotee, the poet Tiruñāṉacampantar, happens to be passing through and he miraculously brings the young man back to life when he learns the tragic circumstances of the event. The poet then urges the revived young man to marry his own cousin then and there. The young man is hesitant:

> Like [Śiva's] red-eyed bull, who obeys every word of his Lord,
> this man said respectfully,
> "You who preserve [the integrity of] the four castes
> created by Brahmā: here, with none of my fellow
> caste members, and without proper witnesses
> how is it possible to perform a wedding?
> [III.64.30]

But Tiruñāṉacampantar is persistent, saying that the well, the Śiva *liṅgam*, and the vaṉṉi (mesquite) tree at the local temple will serve as witnesses. Who is this young man to question the famous wonder-working poet to whom he literally owes his life? The wedding is performed and the newlywed couple return to Madurai. The young man lives with his two wives, the first giving

birth to several children, the second giving birth to only a son. The two wives eventually come into conflict, the first insisting that she is the only real wife of the merchant and that the second did not marry him at all. Unable to provide any tangible proof of her rights as a legitimate spouse, the second wife appeals to Śiva, and threatens suicide unless the Lord will bring the witnesses of her marriage to Madurai to attest to the propriety of her wedding. The entire town is amazed when the tree, the well, and the Śiva *liṅgam* appear miraculously in the outer courtyard of the northeastern corner of the Madurai temple. The second wife is finally vindicated. She is praised throughout Madurai for her divine qualities, and for the miraculous powers attributed to her fidelity (*kaṟpu*) and her love for the Lord (III.64.47,48). Again, the wronged woman does not turn out to be vicious or vindictive: when the merchant learns the circumstances of the quarrel which led to the miraculous event in the temple, he decides to repudiate his first wife. But the second graciously and magnanimously intervenes, asking him not to send the first wife away. He accedes, and they all live happily together thereafter.

In both these episodes, we have decidedly mortal women who, by virtue of their own strength in the midst of adverse circumstances, are able to assume divine qualities. Gaurī's eventual transformation is more dramatic and more emphatic: she actually becomes Śiva's wife. The daughter of the deceased merchant is praised as being "godlike." In each case Śiva intervenes to assure that each woman is accorded the status in marriage which is her due.

Strictly speaking, an unhappy marriage is a contradiction in terms. It is a denial of the proper, inherent order in society: one of the most common terms for marriage, *maṅkalam*, means happiness, auspiciousness, goodness, splendor. Indeed, it is by means of marriage, a proper marriage arranged according to the rules, within the correct caste, and before the proper witnesses, that a woman takes on divine qualities. Among Tamils, says Reynolds (1980, 35–36), "the power of the married woman is so great . . . that no being, animate or inanimate, human or divine, can match it." The term *maṅkalai* is used to designate the goddess Pārvatī or any married woman.

That marriage does constitute for the woman a divine "promotion" is emphasized in "The Chapter in Which a Net Is Cast" (III.57). This episode focuses not on the human woman who acquires divine powers, but on the goddess Mīnākṣī, whose demotion to human status can be reversed only by her remarriage to Śiva.

In highly abbreviated form, the plot is this: because Mīnākṣī was once inattentive to Śiva's explanations of the Vedas, he cursed her to be reborn as a human in a low caste of fishermen. Her dismay caused him to soften the blow a bit: she will, he tells her, be the daughter of the king of fishermen, and Śiva himself will one day appear to relieve her of the curse by marrying her, thus restoring her rightful divinity. When her two sons, Subrahmaṇya and Gaṇeśa, learn that their father has dealt with their mother so harshly, they are enraged. Gaṇeśa takes all his father's sacred books and throws them into the ocean.

Subrahmaṇya takes the book entitled *Civañāṉapōtam* from his father's hands and throws it, too, into the waves. Śiva then goes on a cursing rampage: his normally watchful guardian Nandin, who has inappropriately permitted the boys to enter so precipitously, is cursed to become an evil fish who must swim in the ocean to collect the books the boys have thrown there. Subrahmaṇya is cursed to become the deaf-mute son of a merchant,[4] but father knows better than to curse Gaṇeśa: those who do—as the text editorializes—suffer the consequences of the curse they pronounce.

And so it all happens: found one day by the childless king of fishermen, Mīnākṣi in the form of a baby girl is reared by the king and his wife. At about the time the king's daughter reaches puberty the village is in crisis. A large fish—which is really Nandin in the form Śiva's curse had stipulated—is completely disrupting fishing activities: it tears nets, upsets boats, and endangers the lives of the fishermen and therefore the source of livelihood of all those who depend on them. The king offers his daughter in marriage to any man who can capture the fish and restore order to the lives of the people in the village. Śiva takes the form of the son of the king of Madurai fishermen, captures the fish, and pulls it ashore in his net, thus winning the king's daughter in marriage. As the king ceremoniously gives his daughter in marriage to Śiva in the form of the young fisherman-prince of Madurai, the miraculous transformation promised by Śiva occurs:

> At that moment, the new son-in-law [*marukaṉ*],
> dressed in wedding garments,
> and the daughter whose eyes shone
> like the leaf-shaped blade of a spear
> ascended into the sky on the bull-vehicle [of Śiva]
> appearing in their true forms [as god and goddess].
> And the fish which lay on the shore
> appeared as he was before
> in the form of Nandin.
> [III.57.58]

Śiva then addresses himself to the fisherman king, explaining how he took pity on the king's plight of childlessness, sent Mīnākṣi to be the king's daughter, and now takes her back as his wife. The king is assured that he will live a happy and prosperous life, and that he will join Śiva and Mīnākṣi in their heaven at his death. The divine couple then returns to Madurai to take their place in the city's temple.

In this episode there are many striking parallels to the earlier marriage of Mīnākṣi, reborn as the daughter of King Malayadhvaja Pāṇḍya (I.4.1 to I.5.199). In the 57th chapter the goddess is reborn as the daughter of a king—a low-caste king albeit, but a king nevertheless. She marries Śiva, thereby reclaiming (or remembering) her divinity. The previously childless king, whose son-in-law Śiva becomes, is guaranteed by this son-in-law divine protection and

rebirth in Śiva's heaven. But this episode also differs from the Mīnākṣi marriage in several respects. For one, the father of the bride here survives to give her away in the marriage ceremony, and he lives for many years thereafter. Another basic difference is that in this second marriage, the dynamics of the goddess's "descent" into human form are narrated. Here, as in the cases of Gaurī and of the merchant's daughter, there is a strong sense that Mīnākṣi has somehow been dealt with unjustly. Śiva obviously overreacts as he goes on his cursing spree, a fact which he himself implicitly recognizes when he modifies the curse he places on Mīnākṣi: eventually he will graciously materialize to efface the effects of his curses on both Mīnākṣi and Nandin. The outrageous reaction of the two sons serves to duplicate, and to underline, the outrageous actions of their father. If there be anyone innocent in this episode of life in the holy family, it has to be Mīnākṣi. She is guilty only of boredom—a sin of omission with which any student of the various, pedantic, and highly convoluted schools of Vedic interpretation can easily identify.

My claim that marriage in *Śiva's Sacred Games* provides the occasion for a blurring of the distinctions between the human and the divine has, thus far, focused on the role of the female. The event of marriage is, for her, a more propitious opportunity to assume (or to reassume) divine qualities than it is for the male. This can be understood partly as a function of what occurs to the female at marriage. The event more radically transforms her. When she marries, her lineage and her body are believed literally to change. She becomes a member of her husband's lineage (see above, chap. 4, "The Perspective of the Center and the Role of the Female"). Indeed, in the text, the sine qua non for a woman to assume benevolent, divine qualities seems to be her appropriate marriage into the proper family. Louis Dumont's observations about the conditions under which women of the Kaḷḷar castes in the Madurai area eventually attain deification are relevant here. He writes:

> deified women achieve the rank of principal divinities not in the lineage into which they were born—where they are never anything more than secondary goddesses—but only in the lineage into which they have actually married, *or into which they should have married*, that is, into a lineage allied with their own and where, as a result, they are able to appear more or less as mothers. [1957, 394; emphasis and translation mine]

Dumont's observations broaden the textual perspective while still confirming it. Women among the Kaḷḷar need not marry humans in order to be deified. Indeed, instances of the unmarried virgin daughter's apotheosis are common (391–94). But even the virgin is divinized as a principal deity (one who has her own temple and priest) only by that lineage into which she should have married were it not for her untimely decease. In the majority of cases, however, she is then regarded as the spouse of a deity.

Seen from the perspective of the worshipper, a woman's divinity can be more appropriately apprehended only by those who can relate to her as a potential

wife, daughter-in-law, or mother. Whichever way the worshipper chooses to regard this goddess, the common denominator, in a sense, is marriage. That is, her relationship to devotees must be predicated on the possibility of her marriage into their lineage. And most often, claims Dumont (395), it is the goddess's status as potential wife which receives the greatest emphasis, placing the male worshipper in direct competition with a god for the possession of women.

There are, however, counterexamples to Dumont's generalization, the most notable being that of Māriyammaṉ, the disease goddess whose worship is widespread throughout southern India. Certain of the varied myths explaining her origin describe her apotheosis in her own lineage, and in her own village (Whitehead, 84–85, 117–19; Beck 1968, 155–57; Brubaker, 351ff.). In these cases she is described as having been a Brahmin woman who has been wrongly married to a low-caste man passing himself off as a Brahmin. She murders the man who has deceived and defiled her, commits suicide, and becomes a vengeance-seeking goddess. She appears as the wronged daughter or sister who is liable to destroy those who have failed to marry her off properly. This failure lies with the woman's father and brothers, the men of her own lineage. Despite this variant, however, even the goddess Māriyammaṉ generally tends to be viewed as a potential spouse by the village that worships her. In certain areas, the annual festival celebrated in honor of Māriyammaṉ includes a ritual sequence in which she is married and then widowed (Beck 1981; Moreno-Arcas 1984a), and one widespread component of village festivals in her honor is the ceremonial marriage of the goddess to the headman of the village (Brubaker, 298; Whitehead, 97).

An extended discussion of marriage and the village goddesses of southern India is beyond the scope of this chapter. The variety of conditions of female apotheosis is great. But there is a common pattern that emerges, one also found in *Śiva's Sacred Games*. Briefly stated, it is this: the conditions of a woman's marriage or of her potential to marry are crucial to the conditions of her apotheosis. Either a woman marries or she does not. If she marries, her marriage can be proper, in which case the male she marries, or the miraculous circumstances of the ceremony, can constitute grounds for apotheosis. Or her marriage can somehow be improper. If the marriage is improper, it can be corrected by divine intercession, as was Gaurī's. Or the injustice of it may remain in the form of a widowed goddess such as Māriyammaṉ who will haunt those responsible. A divinized woman who lived and died as an unmarried virgin is, however, worshipped in terms of her capacity to be a wife, either the wife of her worshippers or of the god whom her worshippers revere. Here, the contrast is revealing between a woman on the one hand and a man on the other, each of whom may, under certain circumstances, undergo apotheosis after death (Blackburn). When a man marries he is not so radically transformed. He remains wholly within his own lineage. Human males who later become deities are revered generally within their own lineage, where they can be worshipped

as fathers, brothers, or sons, but never as spouses. Unable to be worshipped as spouses, their divinized forms remain, on the whole, secondary, or as Dumont puts it, *subalterne* (1957, 394).

The logic seems, then, to be this: a human who becomes a deity can become a *principal* deity only for that lineage who can worship that person either as a spouse or as the spouse of a deity attached to that lineage. A deified man cannot normally be worshipped as the spouse of a goddess of the lineage from which he has or would have taken a wife. Were this to occur the goddess would, by the rules, have to desert the lineage of her "residence." This is because women, when they marry, move into the lineage of their husband. Divinized males conceived as spouses can only take women away. They cannot, by normal standards, enter into the female's lineage to assume a residence there. This is perhaps why the more widespread and well-known village deities of southern India tend to be female. The female who becomes a deity may "marry into" and therefore move into a variety of contexts. The male, however, is limited: when he becomes a minor deity he can usually be worshipped nowhere except within his own lineage. Though he may be regarded as a spouse by the women of other lineages, that point of view removes women from their own lineage rather than moving him out of his and into theirs. Women, then, are far more mobile: they move from one lineage to another at the time of marriage. As goddesses, they can move into new villages, "settle" there, and develop a following among worshippers who may come to know them in their capacity to be regarded as spouses to the males of the village.

By this point, however, the careful reader may have noted an apparent problem when we consider all this in light of what happens in the text. How is it that in *Śiva's Sacred Games* we find Śiva, the divine male par excellence, marrying *into* the Pāṇḍya family, becoming one of them? There is no real problem once we understand the differences between Śiva, the highest of all deities, and the run-of-the-mill deified male in the folk and village tradition. Any human male who is in the process of being deified is on his way up. He is upwardly mobile in the human-divine hierarchy. And he clearly has a long, long way to go to reach the status of Śiva. He is the *bourgeois gentilhomme* in a society of wealthy and landed aristocrats. Because he is nowhere near the top of the heap, he must continue to try harder. In fact, because he is so near the bottom of the heap, he must avoid any kind of ritual or social demotion. Failure to do so might mean rebirth as an ambiguous or malicious ghostlike figure such as the *devva* or the *dēvata* described by Harper (1959). Were the newly deified male to be enshrined in a lineage of lower status, by definition the lineage from which he normally would take a wife, that enshrinement would constitute a loss of social and ritual purity for him. And while such an enshrinement would probably raise the ritual and social status of that lineage, it is likely that it would constitute a step backward in the deity's progression up, as occurs, in fact, with the Brahminic, vegetarian deity Aiyaṉār (Dumont 1959a).

By contrast, the supreme deity Śiva can afford to compromise himself. He

can assume the form of a lowly Pāṇḍya king: the spirit of *noblesse oblige* comes naturally to any deity whose purity and power are impeccable. Grace (*aruḷ*), mercy, and benevolence are, in fact, the most consistent of his characteristics in *Śiva's Sacred Games*: he condescends to marry the Pāṇḍya daughter Mīnākṣi and to sit on the Pāṇḍya throne. Time and time again, Śiva's involvement in the lives of his Madurai devotees is attributed to the graciousness he exhibits to those who love him. Unlike the myriad lesser deities, such as Indra or Varuṇa, who must guard their divinity jealously against ambitious and upwardly mobile humans who threaten to displace them (e.g., *TVP* I.13.1–20; I.14.1–59; I. 18.1–19; II.19.1–26), Śiva need not be so defensive. His power and purity are such that any human contact with him can occur only because he magnanimously condescends to permit it. His repeated interventions in the lives of the Pāṇḍya kings and Madurai Śaivas are, for him, nothing more than gracious, divine play (Tam., *tiruviḷaiyāṭal*; Skt., *līlā*). He has nothing to lose, and so can even appear as a filthy wood vendor or a mother pig: quintessential purity does not risk defilement by contact with the normally polluting world (Vail).

More in keeping with the Kaḷḷar pattern described by Dumont is Śiva's second marriage with the daughter of a fisherman king (*TVP* III.57.1–94). In this second marriage, the son of the king of Madurai fishermen, who is really Śiva in disguise, marries the daughter of another fisherman, who in her turn is really Mīnākṣi. Eventually Śiva takes her away to live with him in her deified transformation in Madurai. The differences between this episode and the classic marriage of Śiva and Mīnākṣi described in chapter three are revealing. In the first and classic instance Śiva plays himself: he is the supreme deity and need not act another part. As Śiva he has no lineage to which to repair with his bride: he is eternal and without progenitors. There is only one possible lineage into which he and his spouse can enter as divinities: hers. But in the second marriage, Śiva takes the temporary form of a human, as does his spouse. In acting as a human it is perfectly acceptable for him to take his new bride back to Madurai, where she is deified in the lineage into which she marries. To do otherwise, that is, to move in with his new in-laws, would be to act in a decidedly unhuman manner. And while the freedom to do just that belongs to Śiva, regardless of the form in which he appears, it is unnecessary to exercise it in this case. Doing so would mean, at the least, deserting the faithful of Madurai.

In each of these marriages what Śiva does makes good sense when predicated on the rules governed by the kinship structures of the Madurai area and on the notion that divinity is most effectively apprehended in the form of a spouse or a potential spouse. The two marriages, seen as a complementary whole, provide just this possibility for male and female worshippers, regardless of their social status. The structural complementarity is rather neat: in the first, more famous marriage the women of Madurai are in a position to worship Śiva as a potential spouse. His entrance into the city causes them to faint, cast off their clothes,

and lose themselves in "a sea of lust" (I.5.138). Marriage to Śiva would be out of bounds for no woman: regardless of her social status, Śiva would be superior. From the female point of view the ideal match, the hypergamous one, is therefore possible.

In the second marriage, though, it is Śiva whose domicile is Madurai. Mīnākṣī is brought there from another place, another lineage. Further, she marries into the "Madurai lineage," so to speak, from an extremely low caste, that of fishermen. She is a possible spouse for virtually all decent Madurai males. From the male point of view the hypogamous ideal is thereby satisfied, as is that of village and lineage exogamy. Here, too, we have some indication of why it is that—the text of *Śiva's Sacred Games* notwithstanding—the goddess of the Madurai temple is ritually the more important deity of the pair. In terms of Madurai temple ritual today, a ritual sequence in which the goddess is given primary honors, it is the male perspective (that in which the deity may be viewed as a spouse or as a potential spouse) which predominates. Strangely, when the male point of view predominates among worshippers, the female predominates among deities. It must be this way if the deity is to be perceived as spouse or potential spouse.

Marriage and the Saṃskāra Cycle

Few would disagree that in India the most important social and religious occasion in a person's life is her or his marriage. At the beginning of part four of his seven-part film documentary on India, the incisive director and narrator, Louis Malle, observed, "Everything here seems to begin and end with marriage."[5] More seasoned observers of India have borne out Malle's impressions with carefully documented ethnographies (Dumont 1965, 93; Beck 1972, 229; Orenstein, 70; Yalman, 349). While there are rather marked disagreements about the traditional Hindu saṃskāras, or "life-cycle rites"—disagreements about how many there are (forty in *Gautama Dharma Sūtra* 8.14–26 cited in deBary, I:230; twelve in Monier-Williams, 353; eighteen in *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* I.2; sixteen in *Caivapūṣaṇam*, 154–58; ten in Inden and Nicholas, 61; ten in Fruzzetti, 9), when they should be performed, and for whom it is appropriate to perform them—there is remarkable unanimity in the conclusion that marriage is one of them and, by far, the most important (Diehl, 181, 187; Inden & Nicholas, 40; Pandey, 153; Dumont and Pocock, 31–35; Beck 1964, 30; Dubois, 134, 205; Gupta, 79; Manu 3.78 in Buhler, 89). Even in a society where celibacy is a religious virtue, it is clear that to become a celibate ascetic without first having experienced marriage and parenthood is to act contrary to social and religious norms.

In fact, marriage is so important among Hindus that the decision to marry is rarely entrusted to the individuals involved. Marriage "arrangements" and "negotiations" are caste and clan concerns. "Love marriages," those in which a

man and woman decide to marry independently of family consultation, are regarded as antitraditional and even dangerous (Fruzzetti, 10–12). When a couple marries, their union is not one of individuals, but of lineages. Each marriage must be arranged in reference to rather strict rules of exogamy and endogamy, for each marriage is a public statement of a family's and a lineage's social and ritual status. In short, every marriage constitutes a public act whereby a family or lineage defines its formal relations with other lineages. An act of marriage is an act of choosing kinsmen.

But it is less with the social meanings of marriage and more with the religious meanings that I am here concerned. In one sense, it is difficult to separate the two. Still, I shall address what marriage does—not so much for the lineage, the family, or for society—but rather what it does for the persons directly involved. My basic point in this section is that marriage is a crucial soteriological event. It is not viewed as symbolic. It is not simply—as Augustine has postulated of the Christian sacraments—"an outward, visible sign of inward, invisible grace." It does something. It changes things. It is necessary for most people because it changes a person in a way nothing else can. Let me begin by focusing on the people most directly involved: the groom and the bride.

Marriage in the Lives of Men

While marriage is extremely important for both men and women in India, it effects a less radical transformation in the life of the male. He continues in most cases to live in his natal house, and—ideally at least—a man's marriage should not effect his roles as a son or brother (Madan 1965, 123). And yet, a man must marry. Failure to do so can often mean that he is "looked upon as having no social status and as being an almost useless member of society" (Dubois, 205). It is crucial that every responsible son have, in his turn, a legitimate son (Skt., *putra*) to repay the debt he owes ancestors and to light his cremation pyre, thus saving him from the hell (Skt., *put*) destined for those who have no sons (O'Flaherty 1976, 324–25; Stutley, 241).

We find several examples of the importance of marriage in *Śiva's Sacred Games*. In one case, Śiva goes so far as to intervene in the ongoing poetic enterprise of the royally sponsored Tamil Academy to assure that one of his devotees will be able to marry. In "The Chapter in Which a Prize of Gold Is Given to Dharmin" (III.52) a poor young Brahmin named Dharmin seeks to marry. But without living parents to arrange the marriage, and without money, he has little to offer a bride. Knowing that King Vaṃśaśūḍāmaṇi Pāṇḍya has established a handsome prize of gold for anyone who composes a poem dealing with the king's secret preoccupation, the clever Dharmin sees his chance. He goes directly to Śiva, whom he addresses as a father, and makes his plight known to the deity:

"Oh, Father, I am without an earthly mother and father.
I am a young man all alone, with no one.
I want desperately to marry.
To relieve me of the burden which weighs heavily on my mind,
give me the poem,"
he said worshipfully.
[III.52.85]

Śiva graciously obliges with a poem that captures the king's preoccupations exactly. But one of the academy poets, the famous but proud Nakkīraṉ, insists that the poem contains a literary fault, and that it is therefore unworthy to be entered into the competition. After a great deal of pedantic haggling with the self-important Nakkīraṉ—haggling in which Śiva himself appears as a poet to defend the verse—Dharmin finally wins the prize. But this final triumph of justice does not occur until the following chapter, in which the chastened Nakkīraṉ, who dares to criticize poetry which is literally divine, receives his just deserts at the hands of Śiva. Thus, by Śiva's gracious gift, and his timely appearance in the Tamil Academy as Dharmin's advocate, the young student is enabled to marry, to become a householder (*gṛhastha*). Marriage, for Dharmin, as for any righteous man, is crucial to living a properly ordered life.

Whether we choose to regard the so-called life cycle rituals (*saṃskāras*) as rites of passage or as purificatory ceremonies,[6] it is clear that the marriage *saṃskāra* is one that fits into either interpretation. If we are speaking strictly of a rite of passage, the marriage ritual can be understood in these terms: it propels a man into the second, and the most important of the four *āśramas*, or stages of life. The *gārhastya*, or householder stage cannot be bypassed: to do so is to condemn oneself and one's ancestors to perdition.

If we are speaking of a time of purification and of transformation, marriage is clearly an occasion when a person is transformed and purified to the point of temporarily *becoming* a deity. This dynamic has been noted widely: the young bridegroom on the day of his marriage is given honors and worship normally reserved only for kings or gods. Dumont and Stevenson have both remarked that among the lower castes the bridegroom is regarded as a king and that, among the Brahmins, he is regarded as a divinity (Dumont 1957, 225–26; Dumont and Pocock, 33; Stevenson, 68, 74, 97). Neither author makes it explicit as to how one differentiates between the worship given kings as opposed to that given deities, a distinction which I believe Hindus themselves would be hard-pressed to make. But the basic point remains: on the day of his marriage a bridegroom is treated with unusual honors. Some regard him as a temporary incarnation of Śiva (Stevenson, 68); others, as a form of Viṣṇu or Rāma (Srinivas 1942, 72, 74; Saraswati, 62; Inden and Nicholas, 32; Fruzzetti, 13). He is, in particular, given special honors by the bride's side of the family. They wash his feet with solemn devotion; they offer him *āratti*, the lamp-waving ceremony most commonly performed as a part of temple worship for deities at the time of *pūjā* worship; and he receives *madhuparka*, a sweet mixture normal-

ly presented to deities and the greatest of humans (Srinivas 1942, 72; Beck 1964, 141; Orenstein, 50; Gupta, 88; Archer 1985, 111; and *TVP* I.5.176).

Marriage for the man, then, constitutes a temporary transformation, at the least. He is treated, indeed, he is regarded as a deity. But the transformation is more than temporary: marriage, more than any other *saṃskāra*, completes him. Unless a man is married, he is considered incomplete. The entire cycle of *saṃskāras*, in fact, can be seen as intended to "prepare the living body to enter the householder stage" (Inden and Nicholas, 62). In Nur Yalman's words, "Brahmin marriage is a sacrament in which, just as Shiva must have his female consort to be complete as a deity, the Brahmin must have his wife" (349). Without a wife, a *dharmapatnī* or "helpmeet in the performance of religious duty," it is impossible to perform the fire sacrifice of the householder, or any other of the prescribed fire offerings. And in the *Laws of Manu* (3.78 in Buhler) we find the claim that of the four life stages, that of the householder is most important since the householder is the one who provides the substance making it possible for those in the other three stages to subsist. The marriage ceremony—the one *saṃskāra* which deities as well as humans observe—is the mandatory occasion for a genuine imitation of divine action by humans.

In the classical tradition, much emphasis is placed on the role of marriage in the life of the Brahmin. Marriage, as well as the other *saṃskāras*, is somehow regarded as more efficacious among the higher castes (Inden and Nicholas, 36). But this does not mean that marriage is somehow less significant in the lives of people of lower castes. Quite possibly, the contrary proposition might be argued: since the lower castes undergo relatively fewer *saṃskāras*, marriage becomes an even more important event for them (Diehl, 187). Marriage is considered the one *saṃskāra* necessary for everyone, and not just for the "twice-born," that is, for those considered worthy of the *upanayana* (thread ceremony) initiation.

Among the lower castes it is not unusual for the marriage ceremony to become the occasion on which several other *saṃskāras* are celebrated, thus collapsing what would normally be several celebrations into a single one. Thurston has noted that this procedure is quite common in southern India. One of the most elaborate examples occurs among a group named the Rāzus, about whom he writes: "At marriage the bridegroom goes through the birth, naming, tonsure, and thread investiture ceremony on the same day" (Thurston, 6; also Dubois, 170). There are, admittedly, practical reasons for this. The proper celebration of the primary *saṃskāras* involves an enormous outlay of cash: guests need to be invited by formal invitation, food for the guests must be provided, priests must be engaged, and a *pantal*, or temporary ritual pavilion, must be constructed (Dubois, 154; *ERE*, 7: 323–24). Telescoping the rituals into a single series of events makes economic sense. But it also makes ritual sense: if the *saṃskāra* cycle is understood as a preparation for the life of the householder (*gṛhastha*), it is appropriate—structurally speaking—to celebrate the *saṃskāras* that precede marriage in a manner that emphasizes the paramount role which

marriage claims. This is precisely the effect of celebrating several at one particularly auspicious time, with marriage as the culminating event.

Celebrated at the textually prescribed and biologically appropriate times, the *saṃskāras* can rightfully be viewed as life-cycle rituals. But when they are celebrated in tandem, the life-cycle paradigm seems inadequate. On the face of it, celebrating a man's birth, his name-giving (normally done on the twelfth day of his life), his first solid food eating (normally in the sixth or ninth month), his first tonsure (normally between the ages of three and five), and his initiation (normally in the eighth, eleventh, or twelfth year for, respectively, Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, and Vaiśyas), all at the age of marriage (twenty-five to thirty, normally) seems a bit inappropriate. However, when the *saṃskāras* are viewed as necessary rituals which purify and transform a man, the important issue is less *when* they occur than it is *whether* they occur.

For this reason, when we are speaking of Brahmins or of much lower castes, the *saṃskāras* seem to make sense as a series of transforming and purifying rituals which culminate with a man's ultimate transformation—his marriage.[7] His purity is so effected, and his transformation so completed, that he becomes—temporarily, at least—a divinity.

The *saṃskāra* cycle is obviously a male-oriented series of rituals. And even though their observances necessarily involve females at certain points, the androcentric emphasis is—with some effort, at times—fairly consistently maintained. For example, the ceremonies of male production (Skt., *puṃsavana*), hair-parting (Skt., *sīmantonayana*, intended to insure a safe birth delivery), and birth (Skt., *jātakarma*) cannot be performed without a woman. The first two are actually performed on the body of the pregnant female. Still, they are not for her: they are for the presumably male embryo within her. It is only at the point of marriage that the female enters the *saṃskāra* cycle, for marriage is understood to be the one *saṃskāra* celebrated for both men and women (Kapadia, 168; Inden and Nicholas, 92). To the role of marriage in the lives of women I now turn.

Marriage in the Lives of Women

Just as marriage takes on greater significance for those who celebrate no other *saṃskāras*—or who celebrate the others only at the time of marriage—so it is that the wedding of a woman, high- or low-caste, is particularly significant for her. Temporarily, if the groom becomes a god, the bride becomes a goddess. She takes on the divine attributes temporarily predicated of her husband (Srinivas 1942, 95; Gupta, 88; Fruzzetti, 75 and 84–89). Stevenson describes it this way:

> . . . the young bride and bridegroom are looked on as incarnations of Śiva and Pārvatī (hence the religious merit derived from worshipping them) . . . .

> During the days when they are representatives of the deities they must not bathe, so after the bath of ceremony taken on the wedding, they can bathe no more for three days . . . and on the third day after the wedding, they bathe, so washing away their divinity. [97]

After the wedding, the couple—rather than just the groom—receives *āratti*, the lamp-waving act of worship (Dubois, 226). Immediately after the ceremony the woman enjoys two privileges which she will never enjoy again, and which suggest that normal rules for human conduct are temporarily suspended: she eats food with her husband (normally the wife eats after her husband), and she performs the *homa* sacrifice with him (Dubois, 226; Beck 1964, 150). And when the bridal couple is taken in procession, the form of the procession suggests that they are deities. Indeed, the *Dharma Śāstras* specify that the newly married couple in procession—regardless of their caste—can claim the right of way over kings and Brahmins (Beck 1964, 146; Kane, 147).

Like her groom, then, the bride becomes a temporary divinity. But more than simply this happens to her. The "minimal" Hindu wedding involves two kinds of rituals. The first tend to be "Sanskritic": they are public in nature, usually involve Vedic chants, and are performed in the presence of the couple by Brahmin priests. In addition to these, however, there is always a set of unique rituals intended strictly for the bride. These rituals vary from one area to another, indeed, from one lineage to another in the same area. But the fact that they are "family-specific" and "region-specific" does not necessarily mean that they are not important. To the contrary: we find in the *Āpastamba Gṛhyasūtra* (I.2.15) that part of every marriage ritual includes the *strī-ācāra*, the set of womens' rituals locally practiced. A. K. Sur has suggested that these sex-specific rituals (from which all men and all widows are excluded) are even more important than the Sanskritic ceremonies involving family priests:

> Though the religious ceremonies as performed by the priests are a necessary and important part of the marriage ceremonial, a greater emphasis is laid on scrupulous adherence to the rituals . . . as performed by the women. These latter, indeed, constitute the core of the marriage rituals. [120]

Anthropologist Lina Fruzzetti has documented these rituals as they occur in Bengal. She does not make the claim that they are more important than the Brahmanical rituals, but she makes it clear that they are intricate and crucial in any marriage celebration. Her analysis is structural as she shows how each series of rituals, called *strī-ācār* prepares the bride for her new role (see also Archer 1985). And just as the bride and groom are treated together as deities, so the woman is treated as a deity by other women in these special female rituals. Fruzzetti concludes that the women who administer and perform the rituals become functional equivalents of Brahmin priests:

> Throughout the rituals the women treat the bride as a divinity, they themsel-

> ves being Lakṣmī and Ṣaṣṭhī. Just as the Brāhmaṇ becomes a god serving gods, so do the women in their sacred roles serve a goddess who will soon become a wife and mother. All these are in fact the same actions the Brāhmaṇ performs when he gives life and respectful service to the clay image of a divinity. [79]

In southern India, the special role which marriage plays in the lives of women is also suggested by the *nōṉpus*, the exclusively female religious rituals which, for married-women, are "the most significant religious acts of the year" (Reynolds 1980, 50–57). According to Reynolds, they are not celebrated at the moment of marriage, but often they are celebrated with marriage in mind. Each *nōṉpu* involves fasting and acts of worship and praise of a selected, married goddess. The intention is to reaffirm the strength of the marriage, that is, "to keep the *tāli* strong," and ritually "to become the goddess" (50). The *nōṉpu*, then, recreates on an annual basis the divine status assumed by a bride on the occasion of her marriage. Though there are several types of *nōṉpu*, each associated with a particular goddess, certain of the ritual elements suggest a recelebration of the marriage. *Sāvitrī Nōṉpu*, for example, ends with a woman's receiving a yellow string around her neck—in effect, a supplementary symbol of her original marriage *tāli*. In southern India, the *tāli* is an ornament worn as a necklace which a woman receives from her husband on the day of her marriage. It functions much like the wedding ring in American culture. This supplementary *tāli* given on the annual occasion of *Sāvitrī Nōṉpu* reaffirms and reenacts a woman's original receipt of the marriage *tāli* from her husband. *Varalakṣmi Nōṉpu* ends with tying around a woman's wrist a yellow thread with nine knots, the knots representing the same nine strands of the sacred thread worn by the initiated, twice-born male who has married and become a father. This particular *nōṉpu* seems to suggest an equation between a woman's marriage and a man's *upanayana*, his formal initiation into the caste.

In quite a different context, other authors have noted what appears to be an implicit equivalence between the effects of the traditional male *upanayana* and the effects of the marriage for the woman. In speaking of Tanjore Brahmins, for example, Kathleen Gough observes that, "like a boy before initiation, a girl acquires no social personality before her marriage; she is regarded as an appendage of her father. She does not observe ritual pollution, and no offerings are performed if she dies" (841). G. Ramdas (139) has also noted the similarities: boys receive their sacred thread at initiation while women receive the sacred *tāli* thread at marriage. Among Kashmiri Brahmins, the death of an unmarried girl incurs pollution for no one; unmarried, a woman cannot receive full cremation rites nor can she take her place properly among the deceased ancestors (Madan 1965, 102, 125). In some cases, most notably among the Nambūdiris of Kerala, the woman who dies without getting married is given a marriage ceremonial before burial. This, at least, assures her an identity, and, therefore, a rebirth.

Marriage, then, provides a woman with an acceptable social identity in the same way that initiation into the caste does so for a man. It is crucial for the woman: before marriage she is not an individual. And, if her marriage dissolves, she loses the coveted title of *cumaṅkali*, "the auspiciously married woman."

Another way to understand the importance of marriage for women is to consider what happens to a woman whose marriage dissolves. Usually, this occurs when her husband dies and she becomes a widow. By comparing what happens to a widow in Hindu society with what happens to the widower, we might gain a further sense of what marriage means for both the woman and the man.

It would not be completely accurate to represent the widow's plight as a miserable one among all Hindus.[8] But it would be accurate to say that the orthodox position is such that a woman's death by suicide on her husband's cremation pyre (*satī*) has often been chosen as preferable to living the life of a widow: the practice was first recommended in the *Vaikhānasa Gṛhyasūtra* 7.2. (See "Sati" in E.R.E) Among the twice-born castes—and therefore among those who attempt more conscientiously to practice the orthodox ideals—a widow may not remarry. She must give up all symbols of her feminine nature: she may not wear jewelry, she must shave off her hair, her *tāli* is taken from her, and she must wear a colorless, bleached sari. The very sight of her is regarded as inauspicious, and her presence—especially at marriages—is strictly forbidden. C. G. Diehl (182) notes that even among Indian Christians the widowed mother of a bride or groom is strictly forbidden to attend the wedding. She does not, he says, simply remind people of an unfortunate fact. She is the active instrument of misfortune: she causes bad things to happen. For this reason, the widow may not participate in either set of womens' rituals discussed here: the *strī ācārs* of Bengal or the *nōṉpus* of Tamiḻnāṭu.

In Hindu society, notes Edward Harper, the widow is often obliquely referred to as an animal (*prāṇi*), and the normal feminine pronouns, she and her, tend to be replaced in everyday conversation by the neuter ones, it and its (Harper 1969, 90). Two of the Tamil terms for "widow," *kaimpeṇ* and *tuṇaiyiṉai iḻakkaceytavaḷ*, are revealing. The first denotes a woman characterized by *kaimai*, that is, by degradation, ignominy, ignorance, and deceit. Indeed, among certain Brahmin communities, widows are believed to be secret murderers, poisoning people whenever given the opportunity (Harper 1969, 82–84). The second term, *tuṇaiyiṉai iḻakkaceytavaḷ*, literally means, "one who causes the loss of her husband." Thus, when a husband dies before his wife, it is she who is believed to be the cause of his death (Reynolds 1980, 55–56; Harper 1969, 86). Like the goddess of smallpox, Māriyammaṉ, a Brahmin widow who, in one cycle of myths, kills her husband and visits disease on mortals, every widow is believed to be dangerous and responsible for bringing about her own inauspicious state. Thus, the widow is not to be pitied or treated well. She is to be punished and feared.

But for the widower it is a different matter. The parallel Tamil term for him

is *maṉaiviyai iḻantavar*, "he who has lost (by death) his wife." The loss is, of course, significant, but it is not irreplaceable. He may remarry and does not need to observe any special rituals besides those which accrue to any family that experiences a death. He is subject to no social sanctions. He is to be dealt with sympathetically rather than to be punished or feared.

We see, then, that a woman's social and ritual status depend on her marriage state in ways that a man's social and ritual status do not. Marriage constitutes her initiation into the caste. It is the source of the most important annual ritual events in which she participates, the *strī ācār*s and the *nōṉpus*. Should her husband die, she suffers a great loss of social and ritual status as well as a significant amount of outright oppression. But there are other differences in terms of what marriage does for a woman. The most dramatic is that it literally changes her *gotra*, her lineage. She is socially and physically incorporated into the blood line of an entirely new family. Her body changes. In indigenous terms, she becomes the "half-body" of her husband (*The Laws of Manu*, X.22 in Bühler; Inden and Nicholas, xiv, 26, 40, 91, 92; Yalman, 170–74; David, 1, 8, 9, 11; Ramabai, 66–68; Sur, 120). Several writers have argued that the marriage for a woman in India literally "changes her blood" (David, Inden and Nicholas, Carter 1973; Fruzzetti objects, 120). It transforms her not just symbolically, figuratively, or in terms of roles. It physically changes her.

Marriage as Soteriological Act

Whether we regard marriage in terms of the male-centered life-stages (*āśramas*) and the *saṃskāra* cycle, or in terms of how it governs the lives of Hindu women, it becomes clear that marriage is much more than a prescribed social convention. It is an indispensable soteriological act. In the hierarchy of rebirths, which includes the animal, the human, and the divine, a person's progress "up" requires that he or she marry. Indeed, successful upward mobility implies that a soul has married frequently in past rebirths. But it is still more complicated: unless a person's progeny marry, his progress "up" as a deceased ancestor cannot continue. When a person's progeny do not marry, that omission poses grave consequences for the future state of that person's own rebirths. In light of this it is not surprising that in the text of *Śiva's Sacred Games* the failure to have a son—or the ritual equivalent, a son-in-law (Inden and Nicholas, 80)—becomes a crisis occasion in a devotee's life. The occasion is serious enough, at the least, to merit Śiva's intervention.

So significant is marriage in the soteriological scheme of things that no rebirth renders it dispensable: the gods, too, must marry. Even Śiva must wed, for unless he does, he is, quite literally, unrelated to the human condition. From the point of view of the devotee, Śiva remains inaccessible if he remains an ascetic. As an unmarried ascetic in the myths of the purāṇic tradition, Śiva is uninvolved in and unconcerned with the mundane problems of the human community: he has no reason to intervene in the lives of devotees. For any ascetic,

noninvolvement and detachment are ideals. But they are appropriate ideals only after the householder (*gṛhastha*) stage has been completed. The true renouncer (*sannyāsin*) must first meet the requirements which society imposes on every person, the requirements to marry and to have children. Only once this is done do the more private, individual concerns deserve to be pursued.

One of the clearer enunciations of the injunction to marry before living the ascetic life occurs in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* (88.2-90.7.), in which Ruci, the ascetic, is finally accosted by the spirits of his departed ancestors, who suffer because he has not married:

> Son, you are lacking in virtue, for you have not taken a wife. Why is this? Marriage is a bridge to heaven and release; without it one is fettered . . . . You increase your bondage every day by your debt to the gods, to us, and to all creatures. How do you hope to reach heaven . . . without begetting sons before shaving your head and renouncing the world? Our fall and your own degradation shall come to pass because of this. [Dimmitt and van Buitenen, 340]

Understood in this way, marriage becomes a quintessential religious act. It is the means by which one begins the prescribed process of repaying debts to the ancestors (by having children), to the gods (by sacrificing—something one cannot do before marriage), and to society (by entering the economy as a productive, working component of it). To gain release from obligations, a person must first acknowledge them and assume them. Marriage is precisely this: an acknowledgement of, and an assumption of, obligations. The divine nature of the bridal pair might be explained in part from this perspective. To marry is to consent to do that without which neither the ancestors, nor the gods, nor society can survive. In willingly assuming these obligations, a person acts graciously, benevolently. S/he affirms and perpetuates the order of the cosmos. S/he acts as we would expect deities to act, and so deserves—at the time of marriage—to be treated as deities deserve.

In the Hindu tradition, then, marriage is not simply a matter of convenience. It is an issue of soteriology. This is why it is so common to speak of marriage "arrangements," "plans," and "negotiations." Marriage is too important a matter to be left to the young couple: it involves much more than conjugal compatibility. The need for the proper arrangement of marriage goes beyond social and soteriological issues in the lives of a single couple. It has implications for an entire lineage's social and ritual status, for the fate of the souls of that lineage's deceased ancestors, and, eventually for the fate of an ordered relationship between humans and between humans and deities.

The Order Marriage Brings

If Śiva can marry, thereby presenting to his human devotees a model worthy of imitation, it must also be made explicit that he does not marry indis-

criminately. When he marries Mīnākṣi he does not marry just any king's daughter: she has conquered the world, and the deities of its eight cardinal points. Śiva chooses to marry the miraculously born and marvelously endowed daughter of the Madurai Pāṇḍya king. But in another sense, he has little choice. He must marry her to tame her, to pacify her, to alleviate the threat she poses to the world order, to *his* order. Like his human devotees, Śiva cannot simply pursue his own goals without interruption. He must cut short his ascetic pursuits to marry, to enter into a relationship that implies a formidable series of obligations to parents-in-law, to devotees in Madurai, and even to birds and piglets. The marriage with Mīnākṣi makes soteriological sense for everyone. What other marriage could accomplish so much? By entering into the marriage, Śiva assures salvation to Pāṇḍya ancestors and descendants. He establishes a firm base in Madurai upon which a righteous, Śaiva kingdom will be built for generations to come. Neither the ancestors, nor the gods, nor society in general has cause to plead unpaid debts. And if the marriage is right for Śiva, there can be no doubt that it is right for the Pāṇḍyas. It is, after all, the very source of the greatness which the Pāṇḍya kingdom claims: the marriage has established a royal-divine order which is at the basis of any successful kingship.

But a properly arranged marriage is only the beginning of the ordering process. The process that marriage begins can founder: death may intervene, the curse of childlessness may linger, or a couple may simply be lax in the formidable series of ritual duties incumbent on the householder (*gṛhastha*). A couple's obligations regarding marriage do not end with their own marriage. They are obliged to arrange for the proper marriages of their children. Failure to take this responsibility seriously is worthy of severe criticism, such as that offered in *Śiva's Sacred Games* (I.23.10) of the father who rashly gave his Śaiva daughter Gaurī in marriage to a Vaiṣṇava man. So important is the responsibility to arrange a child's marriage properly that Śiva himself is not exempt from it. One of his last major acts as the monarch of Madurai is to arrange the marriage of his son, Ugra Pāṇḍya. And though he is generally omniscient, Śiva makes the marriage arrangements in full consultation with his ministers. The 12th chapter, in fact, begins with Śiva's decision to arrange the marriage of his son:

> The elderly Lord of the Vaigai River [i.e., Śiva]
> realizing that the appropriate time had come
> to arrange the marriage of His beloved son,
> assembled His ministers and counsellors together,
> and inquired of them who,
> among the appropriate royal families,
> would be deserving enough for our lord [i.e., Ugra].
> Who would be faultless, of unassailable purity,
> and of a well-known, proper lineage?
> [I.12.2]

For the only time in the document Śiva is referred to here as being elderly (*kiḻavaṉ*). The reference provides a hint of what is to come. In this 12th chapter Śiva completes his royal responsibilities and prepares to abdicate. He arranges his son's marriage, gives him three special weapons with which to defend the kingdom, crowns Ugra king, and retires with Mīnākṣī to his eternal abode within the temple. The chapter takes its name from the act of Śiva's bestowing special weapons on the young king-to-be: "The Chapter in Which Ugra Pāṇḍya Is Given a Spear, a Discus, and a Bludgeon."

Śiva's ministers recommend that Ugra marry a woman named Kāntimati, who is "like" an incarnation of the goddess Lakṣmi (I.12.3). She is the daughter of King Somaśekhara of the solar dynasty and the family resides in Maṇavūr, "the City of Marriage," which Somaśekhara rules. Śiva's ministers set out for Maṇavūr to begin the negotiations, but Śiva exercises his divine prerogative: he appears to Somaśekhara in a dream, telling him of the marriage plans, and instructing him to bring his daughter immediately to Madurai. This Somaśekhara does, meeting the Pāṇḍya ministers on the way and telling them that he consents to the proposal made by the groom's father in his dream. Forty-nine of the sixty-six verses in this chapter deal with the details of the marriage ritual in which Somaśekhara gives his daughter to Ugra Pāṇḍya, who is, himself, specifically designated as being "like the victorious, spear-wielding Kumaraṉ," a deity whom the Tamils regard as Śiva's first son, as the commentary makes explicit (I.12.8).

Despite the fact that the title of chapter 12 refers to the weapons-presentation incident, which involves only three of the sixty-six verses, the most important event in the chapter is the marriage ceremony. The rituals parallel those performed at the marriage of Ugra's parents, but they are much less detailed here. Of particular concern in this case is the structure of the marriage arrangement. Somaśekhara is a descendant of the solar dynasty. His daughter is "like" the incarnation of Lakṣmi, Viṣṇu's wife. These two facts would normally lead us to the conclusion that Somaśekhara is Vaiṣṇava. But his name tells us otherwise. "Somaśekhara" is the term for that Śiva who wears the moon in His hair. The alliance is thus structured in such a way that Ugra marries the daughter of a Śaiva—the only proper arrangement—but she is a Śaiva with Vaiṣṇava qualities.

We find the same ambiguity inherent in the founding marriage of chapter five of *Śiva's Sacred Games*. There, Śiva marries the daughter of Malayadhvaja, the Śaiva king of the lunar, Pāṇḍya dynasty. But it is Viṣṇu, the solar, Vaiṣṇava deity par excellence who gives Mīnākṣī away in the marriage ceremony.

One way to sort out this apparent confusion is to understand the marriage alliance in terms of a ritualized and systematic expression of the need to establish ordered relationships between certain divisions of the cosmos. The occasion of marriage calls specific attention to these divisions. As we have seen, it is a time when very careful attention must be paid to the qualities of a candidate which qualify or disqualify him or her as a spouse: matters of birth,

religious affiliation, purity, and ritual practice are paramount. But at the same time, marriage provides the occasion for interaction between these ordered, binary divisions. Marriage becomes much more than the occasion for the union of male and female. In *Śiva's Sacred Games* the marriage ceremony becomes an important occasion for regulating and ordering relationships between males and females, Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas, lunar and solar dynasties, humans and deities, and, as we shall see shortly, even between humans and animals.

One repeated instance of this is the way the relationships between the Pāṇḍya and Cōḷa royal dynasties are portrayed. In the text, the solar dynasty of the Cōḷas represents the most consistent and serious military threat which the Pāṇḍyas face. And yet, the Cōḷa dynasty is the royal lineage from which Pāṇḍya kings tend to take their more prominent wives. Mīnākṣī's mother and Malayadhvaja's wife was Kāñcaṉamalai, the daughter of the Cōḷa King Śūrasēna (*TVP* I.4.3 and the commentator's note glossing *pāṉuvaḷi.*). Similarly, the famous queen Vaniteśvari, wife of King Kubja Pāṇḍya, was given in marriage by her Cōḷa father following a decisive military defeat of both the Cōḷa and Cēra kingdoms by Kubja Pāṇḍya. The marriage constitutes a gracious gesture on the part of Kubja Pāṇḍya: it is meant as an act of reconciliation with the Cōḷas. After the marriage Kubja Pāṇḍya returns to his conquered father-in-law the Cōḷa territory captured in war. Significantly, the captured Cēra kingdom is not returned, for no marriage with the Cēra lineage is in the offing. In addition to giving his daughter to Kubja Pāṇḍya, the Cōḷa king also sends his prized advisor and minister Kulabandhana to serve in the Pāṇḍya royal court, and it is these two Cōḷa-sent people who, eventually with the aid of Māṇikkavācakar, save the Pāṇḍya kingdom from the scourge of domination by the Jain religion (*TVP* III.62.1–68). The Cōḷas and the Pāṇḍyas are thus indispensable to each other—as enemies and as allies. There is a firm sense of security in living in a cosmos ordered so well that you know your enemies intimately.[9] And if it is helpful to have a clear definition of who one's enemies are, it is also helpful to know that an enemy can become an ally by means of marriage. As it is among the Nambikwara of western Brazil, so it is in the Cōḷa-Pāṇḍya relationship presented in *Śiva's Sacred Games*:

> . . . a continuous transition exists from war to exchange, and from exchange to intermarriage, and the exchange of brides is merely the conclusion of an uninterrupted process of reciprocal gifts, which effects the transition from hostility to alliance, from anxiety to confidence, and from fear to friendship. [Lévi-Strauss 1969, 67]

Another example of this dynamic in the Cōḷa-Pāṇḍya relationship occurs in the 35th chapter, entitled "The Chapter in Which a Water Pavilion Is Erected" (*TVP* II.35.1–37). The episode begins at the point where Kāntārachedaka Cōḷa has decided that the protracted conflict between his kingdom and the Pāṇḍya kingdom should end. He sends gifts to Rājendra Pāṇḍya, and the gesture is reciprocated. Encouraged, he proposes that he give his own daughter in mar-

riage to the Pāṇḍya king. But before the marriage negotiations can be settled, Rājendra's jealous younger brother goes to the Cōḷa king explaining why he, rather that his elder brother, should marry the Cōḷa daughter. Kāntārachedaka is convinced, for there seems more to be gained this way. The marriage is performed and the Cōḷa king starts out with his army to defeat Rājendra Pāṇḍya in battle and to install his new son-in-law on the Pāṇḍya throne as a Cōḷa puppet. But—as so often before—Śiva intervenes at the request of the Pāṇḍya king Rājendra, establishing in the midst of battle a pavilion where Pāṇḍya troops can find shade, rest, and water. This logistical advantage gives the upper hand to the outnumbered Pāṇḍya forces, and they win in battle. Kāntārachedaka and his new son-in-law (who is, after all, the Pāṇḍya king's younger brother) are captured, but treated mercifully. The Cōḷa kingdom remains intact: later generations of Pāṇḍya kings are thus assured a source of wives as well as a source of enemies. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

In this episode marriage is both a means of possible reconciliation and the cause for reinstituting war. It can serve to alleviate cleavages as well as to exacerbate them. Still, the essential fact remains: even though Kāntārachedaka Cōḷa deceitfully gave his daughter in marriage to the wrong Pāṇḍya, he still gave her to a member of the Pāṇḍya dynasty. The Pāṇḍyas and the Cōḷas are in-laws. No matter how audacious, mendacious, and pugnacious *Śiva's Sacred Games* makes the Cōḷas out to be, they are still the loyal opposition—for better and for worse. Further, we need to notice in the text that Pāṇḍya daughters are never given to Cōḷa kings in marriage. Pāṇḍyas are wife-receivers when it comes to dealing with the Cōḷas. Their social superiority over the Cōḷas is thereby affirmed, given the hypergamous ideal for females. If it can be said of Boston Brahmins that "the Cabots speak only to Lowells and the Lowells speak only to God," it can be said of south Indian kings that Cōḷas give daughters to Pāṇḍyas and Pāṇḍyas give daughters to God. This, at least, reflects the structure of the cosmos from the Pāṇḍya perspective. And from this perspective, the Pāṇḍyas need the Cōḷas, just as the higher castes need the lower ones.

A final example of how marriage affirms, while establishing anew, the order of the cosmos, is presented in chapter 46, "The Chapter in Which Baby Piglets Are Made Royal Ministers" (II.46.1–18). The chapter is the second in a sequence of two in which Śiva shows his grace by taking the form of a mother pig to breast-feed the twelve starving babies of the deceased king and queen of boars.[10] At the conclusion of chapter 45 the piglets attain remarkable perception and intelligence as a result of feeding from Śiva's breast milk. Śiva graciously gives them human bodies, but they retain their boar heads. In chapter 46, Śiva appears to Rājarāja Pāṇḍya and instructs him to seek out these twelve anthropomorphic boars (or theriomorphic men?) and to make them chief ministers of the kingdom. The king's men find the twelve and bring them back to Madurai. But before they can assume their tasks as ministers, arrangements are made for them to marry:

> The king arranged elaborate marriages [for the ministers] with the beautiful daughters of the former ministers.
> The ceremonies were celebrated according to the prescriptions and with glorious pomp.
> In this way the ministers were inducted into the Pāṇḍya court, and given warriors' anklets and armor.
> [II.46.12]

Here, marriage is the means by which the twelve piglets are integrated into the human, Pāṇḍya community. Having human bodies helped, of course, but it was not sufficient. The twelve lived in these forms on Paṉṟimalai ("Pig Hill," a term for the Paḷani Hills near Madurai) until Rājarāja's men summoned them to the court. Once again, the event of marriage focuses attention on one of the ordering divisions of the cosmos, the division between the human and the animal. And just as marriage makes it possible for particularly gifted humans to assume the qualities of deities, it also makes possible the entrance of animals into the human community.

This marriage in particular calls attention to the important fact that even though marriage can serve to span certain basic boundaries, those boundaries are nevertheless important and need to be respected. Not just any pig can marry the daughter of a Pāṇḍya minister. These twelve were once human. Like Mīnākṣī, whose demotion from goddess to human status resulted from a curse (III.57.1–5), these pigs were once mischievous humans, demoted subsequently to piglet form by the curse of an ascetic (II.45.1–10). In addition, the piglets were the sons of the king and queen of pigs, and they were the selected recipients of Śiva's graciously bestowed breast milk.

If marriage in *Śiva's Sacred Games* serves as a mechanism to bridge certain basic distinctions of the cosmos, such as those between animal and human, human and human (such as Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava, Cōḷa-Pāṇḍya), or human and divine, we also need to realize that all such distinctions are not thereby bridgeable. In fact, ill-considered attempts of this sort often fail. The Śaiva Gaurī's first marriage failed because the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava distinction proved, in this case, unbridgeable. And this was true despite the fact that both were Brahmins (II.23.1-33). Similarly, the Pāṇḍya-Cōḷa marriage alliance does not always effect rapprochement, as we have seen above. Not even the highly orthodox, intracaste, cross-cousin marriage of the merchant's daughter is exempt from problems if basic matters of custom and precedence are glossed over. When marriage is the mechanism for "promotion" up, either from the animal to the human or from the human to the divine spheres, that promotion never occurs in *Śiva's Sacred Games* without divine catalysis. The twelve pigs, Mīnākṣī as the Pāṇḍya daughter, Mīnākṣī as the fisherman's daughter, the merchant's daughter, and Gaurī—none of these achieved a promotion without Śiva.

Instead of serving primarily to render social and cosmic distinctions dispensable, marriage does almost the opposite. It calls attention to the rare conditions under which these distinctions can be ignored, and so serves to affirm the

ordered structure of the cosmos.[11] An example of this can be seen in one of the Madurai temple fresco paintings which illustrates the marriage of the pig-headed ministers with their human brides (Dessigane, Pattabiramin, and Filliozat 1960, 2: xxiii and plate 46.8). The painting is dramatic: men with strikingly repugnant pigs' heads ceremonially accept the hands of twelve beautiful women in marriage. Somehow, the marriage of a beautiful woman with a (literally) pig-headed man emphasizes at the emotional level the differences between the animal and the human. And yet, it is this same marriage which functions to collapse these distinctions.

In the history of religions, Mircea Eliade has demonstrated how this phenomenon might operate on a much larger scale. He notes that the cosmic marriage of the male sky god with Mother Earth does two things. On the one hand it emphasizes the transcendence of sky gods, and yet at the same time it transforms them from what he calls *dei otiosi* to *dei pluviosi*: these sky gods take on "functions, attributes, and honors foreign to them, and for which they had no concern in their celestial transcendence." Their marriages force these sky deities to "absorb into their personality and into their worship . . . elements which did not belong to their original celestial make-up" (1963, 92–93). For Eliade, and for other scholars who have dealt with sacred marriage, this cosmic hierogamy had implications only for the fertility of the earth and for the deities whose responsibility that fertility became. It had little to do with the structuring of the human or the animal worlds. The Tamil material invites a broader understanding of sacred marriage (*hieros gamos*). It shows how marriage affirms the existing structures of the human, animal, and divine realms; but it also demonstrates that—given the right circumstances—people, animals, and deities may move within that structure.

VI.
The Bonds Sacred Marriage Creates
Kinship Terms in Personal Devotion

Popular religious devotion in India involves relatively little abstract theological discussion. For the majority of lay devotees religious issues are not topics for speculation. Instead, they have to do with practical matters and personal affairs. If the deities are important, they must be important in a concrete way: they protect, provide, heal, and occasionally punish. For the most part, Hindu deities are not ethereal, unchanging conceptual or symbolic entities; they have bodies, or images, their "temperaments" and physical appearances are perceived to change, and they are related to each other as well as to certain individuals or groups of people in specifiable ways.[1] This is one of the reasons why a study of Hindu devotion can profit from concentrating on particular, concrete (occasionally, literally so) deities, deities whose images may be seen, touched, smelled, even tasted.

One of the clearest systematic demonstrations I have found of this dynamic appears in Manuel Moreno-Arcas's (1984a) study of the deity Skanda, known among the Tamils as Murukaṉ. Murukaṉ's famous shrine in the Tamil town of Paḻani constitutes a pilgrimage center for millions of devotees. Moreno-Arcas shows that the patterns of relationships which two castes in particular have with this deity are determined by the relative "cool" or "warm" characteristics ascribed to those castes. Castes classified as "right-hand," those primarily involved in agricultural pursuits, are considered to be active, expansive, and "warm"; left-hand castes, those involved in merchant and commercial enterprises, are regarded as contained, aloof, and "cool."

Murukaṉ of Paḻani is understood to undergo physical changes as a result of his interaction with various devotees and in the course of seasonal and astral variations. Specifically, Murukaṉ's bodily image is believed to expand and warm during the hot season and to contract and cool during the cold, moist season. For this reason, devotees bring him counterbalancing substances which either warm or cool his body/image, depending on the need of the deity, and the time of the year. After the substances have been offered to the deity and applied to his image, devotees receive back from the deity's priests these same substances understood to be transformed by virtue of their contact with the deity's image. As a result of the contact, the substances contain either an excess of divine "warmth" or "coldness," depending on the condition of the deity when the substances were applied. Those castes with a warm nature are suited to consume the substances which have absorbed the deity's excess warmth;

those castes with a cool nature are suited to receive those substances which have absorbed the deity's excess coolness.

Deities and devotees who enter into transactions with each other are thus directly affected and changed by those transactions. Under the best and most carefully regulated of circumstances, the transactions are mutually beneficial for the deity and the devotee, and although deities need what human beings have to offer, the gifts bestowed by the deity are always more valuable, and more generously given.

It thus becomes clear, perhaps, why Moreno-Arcas talks about "the physics of worship." This is a physical process, and a mutual one which occurs in a series of transactions between deity and devotee. It is based on the exchange of heat (in the case of Murukaṉ) and of other subtle essences. Humans enter into this process either out of a diffuse sense of devotion or because they require something from the deity. The deity chosen and the time or type of worship performed depend upon basic "compatibilities" between the person (or caste) involved, the season, and the particular needs or predilections of the deity (see also Moreno 1985).

Deities are approached when devotees require their help or support, and they are approached in a personal way, as though they were persons with preferences, needs, and predispositions. They may be offered gifts of food, clothing, or valuables, as is done in the regular worship ceremonies, termed *pūjā*, or in those performed at the special request of individuals. The latter are called *aruccaṉai*, and are financed by the individuals requesting them. During these ceremonies the deity is treated almost as an important guest or as a powerful royal figure. Part of the offerings, particularly the food offerings, are returned by mediating priests to the worshipper. This food, understood to be the deity's *prasāda*, or "gracious leftovers," is then consumed by the devotee and so represents a form of communion, a substance shared between the devotee and the deity and which, in being shared by both, brings the two together momentarily (Fuller 1984, 14–15). In his detailed description of *pūjā* ceremonies for the deity Gaṇeśa, Paul Courtright (1985a) proposes that the common goal of all *pūjās* is to create a series of transactions which will "bring about an enhanced level of intimacy between the worshipper and the deity" (175). This temporary closeness, this sharing of a particular time, place, and substance with the deity, is mutually beneficial. As we have seen, the benefits for the deity can be quite specific, such as the adjustment of a particular bodily thermic imbalance. Or the benefits can be more diffuse, such as those accruing to anyone (or any deity) who receives needed nourishment, gifts, honor, pledges of service, or songs of effusive praise (see also Diehl, 146ff.).

Devotion as Financial Contract

Particularly for the devotee, the opportunity worship provides for meeting with and pleasing the deity is significant. If the devotee is so inclined, it places

her or him in a position to make special requests, to ask for what Tamils call a "loan" (*kaṭaṉ*), an individual boon or favor. The occasion of making such requests to the deity usually involves the devotee's specific commitment that s/he will repay the debt thereby contracted. In some cases, a gift may be presented at the time of the request. In some, it may be presented after a specific amount of time, to "remind" the deity of the request. However, the more pragmatic devotees, or those interested in a largely instrumental relationship with the deity, will pay only for divine services rendered, and after they are rendered.[2] The process constitutes a classic quid pro quo agreement: once the devotee has received what s/he asks of the deity, s/he must repay the loan by living up to her or his side of the bargain. The term used in this context is *nērttikaṭaṉ*; it is a combination of the words *kaṭaṉ*, meaning "debt," "obligation," or "borrowed article," and *nēr*, meaning "that which is fit, appropriate, or complete."[3] Though a single word, the term *nērttikaṭaṉ* may be used to refer to two distinct acts. The first is the act of worship during which a person makes a request of a deity and simultaneously pays in advance or makes the commitment to repay the deity in a specific way once the request is granted. The second refers to the act of paying off the "debt" once the request is granted (*TL*, 2357; Diehl, 256ff.; Reiniche 162ff.; Moreno-Arcas 1984a, 19ff.). It is sometimes appropriate, as Moreno-Arcas points out, to allow a certain amount of time to pass between the moment when a person receives her or his desired request and the subsequent occasion when the repayment is made. This way, a devotee remains under obligation to the deity during the intervening period and should be ever mindful of the fact.

As in interpersonal relations, so in devotee-deity relations: it is foolish to approach a deity to request what that deity cannot give. The goddess Māriyammaṉ, for example, is normally approached for assistance when a person needs to be healed of a fever or a fever-related disease, such as cholera or smallpox. Pāṇṭiyammāḷ, a woman I interviewed in the Tamil village of Aruppukkōṭṭai, negotiated with the goddess Māriyammaṉ in order to cure her son of smallpox. When the boy became sick, she went directly to the town's Māriyammaṉ temple and pledged to endow a religious procession every year for the annual Māriyammaṉ festival if the goddess would cure her son. The boy recovered, and it was during a festival procession she financed that I spoke with her. But a barren woman would not go to the disease-causing (and therefore disease-curing) Māriyammaṉ of Aruppukōṭṭai. She would normally approach the "helpful Māriyammaṉ" (Tuṇaimāriyammaṉ) of Madurai, whose reputation for removing barrenness is excellent. As in medicine, so in devotion: it is better to depend on specialists for best results. Because Gaṇeśa removes obstacles, he is normally worshipped at the outset of any important undertaking, a long trip for example or even the writing of a devotional work (e.g. *TVP* I."Kāppu"). Aiyaṉār and Karuppaṉ are worshipped in the Madurai area when physical protection is desired, for they are guardian deities par excellence (Dumont 1959, 75–87; Diehl, 258). Maturaivīraṉ, a deity enshrined

outside the east wall of the Mīnākṣi Temple, is reputed to offer special consideration to women whose parents are involved in negotiating marriage arrangements for their daughters. In Kerala, a state to the west of Tamilnadu with a relatively sizeable Christian population, this basically Hindu notion that deities have their specialties, and may be called upon for particular requests, has had its influence on Christian devotion. Not far from a Hindu shrine dedicated to Ettumanur Devan, a local Hindu deity reputed to have special powers to heal victims of serious snake bite, there is a Christian shrine to the deity Aruvithura Saint George, slayer of reptilian dragons, and also reputed to have healing powers over dangerous snake bites.[4]

Obviously, particular deities have specialized powers, personalities, and preferences, and one deity may have powers which another will not. In this cosmos of divine specialists, certain particularly powerful deities are often regarded as general practitioners.[5] Śiva of Madurai (Sundareśvara), for example, protects devotees from harm *and* removes impurity or sin. (See *TVP* I.1.1-97; 2.1-29; II.26.1-41; 48.1-25 for sin removal. For protection, see *TVP* I.13.1-20; 14.1-59; 15.1-45; 18.1-19; II.29.1-38; 37.1-22; III.50.1-44.) The Murukaṉ shrine at Paḻaṉi is frequented by pilgrims for a wide variety of reasons: to insure a safe childbirth, to heal diseased limbs, or to guarantee passing a major academic examination, to name only a few.

In all of these cases, the devotee knows that whatever is promised to a deity as repayment for the "loan" received, that repayment must please the deity for whom it is intended. Murukaṉ of Paḻaṉi, for example, is pleased by devotees' offerings of their own hair. Kaṟuppaṉ, the protector, appreciates weapons or meat offerings. Aiyaṉār, who is iconographically depicted atop a large horse, prefers the gifts of model clay horses and vegetarian food (Diehl, 258; Dumont 1959, 83-85). Normally the goddess Māriyammaṉ insists on blood offerings. In every village festival to her which I have witnessed there have been frequent animal sacrifices, and the shedding of human blood by devotees who have contracted "blood debts" to the goddess. Usually, devotees will pierce their tongues with long needles or their backs and sides with hooks tied to ropes attached to processional carts which the bleeding devotees pull, somewhat painfully, in procession (*Kalai* 8:246-47).

Because deities have their preferences, offerings that please one deity may not please another. Madurai's Śiva, for example, would be most unlikely to respond to a request accompanied by the promise of an offering of blood.[6] As a vegetarian deity, he might even be offended. Most certainly, the priests who care for his image would be upset: in that temple Śiva's preference is for vegetarian food and precious jewels. In all this, the wise devotee knows that if the pledged offering or "repayment plan" is tailored to the deity's preferences, it is more likely that the desired results will be forthcoming.

In this brief description of worship based on needs devotees have, or on "loans" they seek, we find several financial metaphors, metaphors the Tamils themselves use. In the process of worship, people refer to "loans," "debts,"

and "repayment." Indeed, the term *kaṭaṉ* may mean either financial debts or observances and exercises enjoined by religion. Moreno-Arcas notes briefly that in Hindu worship these financial, banking metaphors are frequent:

> The god of Tirupati is often addressed by devotees as *Vāddikkasūla Vada*, "the Collector of Interest," while the god of Paḻaṉi concludes his daily routine with "the reading of accounts" (*aṉrata kaṇakku*), the daily statement of temple income presented to him by his priests. [1984a,15]

If deities are willing to make their powers and talents available to devotees, they are usually willing to do so for a price. Sometimes, the price is no less than single-minded love, devotion, and service. Sometimes it is much less, such as a gift or a specific service. But contractual alliances between devotees and deities which are based on financial metaphors are not the only sort we find. Certain deities are willing to enter into more permanent but less specific alliances. Another way of understanding these alliances is to talk about them in the context of the Tamil kinship system, using that system's kinship terms as metaphors.

Devotion as Kinship Alliance

I have argued in chapter one that when we speak of a deity who marries, we are using a metaphor. The metaphor can be sustained in various ways because the kinship system from which it derives is the nexus for rich emotional and personal experiences common to almost all Tamils. In chapter four I discussed the sacred marriage festival of Madurai, showing how an analysis of the Tamil kinship system helps us to understand what Tamils mean when they participate in the festival and speak of Śiva and Viṣṇu as brothers-in-law, of Śiva and Mīnākṣī as husband and wife, and of Viṣṇu and Mīnākṣī as brother and sister. I would like to return now to a discussion of several of these kinship terms. I propose to show how certain kinship terms, particularly "in-law" terms, provide Tamils with meaningful categories for talking about deities.

Hinduism is not the only tradition that uses kinship terms to talk about deities. In both Christianity and Hinduism, for example, we find descriptions of divinity as father,[7] mother,[8] spouse,[9] or even son[10] and daughter.[11] These terms tend to do two things. First, they serve as devotional models[12] for how worshippers may regard their deities. If the divine is praised as a father, for example, the devotee assumes the point of view of a dependent child. Second, these terms help devotees understand or posit relationships among various facets of the divine. For instance, the relationship between God and Jesus is described as that between father and son. In Hinduism, Śiva and Pārvatī are husband and wife, just as Gaṇeśa and Skanda (Murukaṉ) are elder and younger brothers. Kinship terms provide particularly vivid and personal ways to talk about deities

because they are terms which reflect experiences nearly all humans share. Further, kinship terms serve to organize relationships, and, therefore, responsibilities and entitlements, in a society. "At a general level, kinship defines the basic patterns of social inclusion and exclusion with respect to obligations" (Cordell and Beckerman, 3). Kinship terms locate us in a social universe by providing us with a ready-made set of expectations and with an etiquette, an explicit as well as a tacit set of standards for what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable behavior in our selective dealings with others. These terms define for us the people for whom we have in some sense a responsibility. And they define those on whom we can depend, from whom we can expect helpful or indifferent behavior; they provide us with norms for interpersonal relations. As Roger Keesing has pointed out, "kinship [in many societies] . . . is the ultimate and ultimately inescapable moral imperative, the quintessential social bond" (31).

Generally, anthropologists speak of two kinds of kinship: affinal and consanguinal. For our purposes, consanguinal relations are what we in the West call "blood relations"; they are determined by a shared parentage or ancestry. Consanguinal kin would include a person's biological parents, siblings, and children. Those related by blood to a person's parents would also constitute consanguinal kinfolk. Kinship relations among deities or between deities and devotees are usually represented by consanguinal kinship terms, and particularly parental ones (Vergote and Tamayo; Roof and Roof).

By contrast, affinal relations are created by and based on the marriage relationship. Though we find affinal terms in the West used as expressions referring to deities, they are relatively rare. For example, nuns in the Roman Catholic Church understand themselves to be "brides of Christ," and their relationship to Jesus is described as a "spiritual marriage." Though sustained references to nuns' nuptial relationship to Jesus may be found quite readily in Christian Church history, the metaphor has had relatively limited popular devotional impact. In fact, sustaining the metaphor by referring to a nun as "God's daughter-in-law" would seem silly, if not meaningless. I would suggest that the reason for this lies in the ambiguity of the category "daughter-in-law" in Western kinship systems. Western society tends to be vague about the duties and expectations of in-laws; the determination of proper conduct between them is largely left to the interpretations of the actors. But, as we have seen, there are more specific expectations of in-laws in the Tamil kinship system. There, the responsibilities, privileges, and rights of in-laws are rather explicit. It is this explicit and positive nature of in-law relationships, particularly in southern India, that makes it possible to use affinal kinship terms to describe—in some detail—deities and their relationships with devotees.

Just as the banking and financial metaphors provide a common understanding for how temporary, goal-directed alliances may be established with a deity, so kinship metaphors, especially those predicated on a marriage relationship, provide a common understanding for how a community of people may become allied to particular deities over generations. One of the major achievements of

Śiva's Sacred Games is, I believe, the document's creative and suggestive use of Tamil kinship terms to describe Śiva and Mīnākṣī: in their relationships to each other, to other deities, and to Madurai devotees. Specifically, the document's focus on the marriage of Śiva and Mīnākṣī as a founding event, as one which sets other relationships into motion, should not be underestimated. The marriage becomes the source of Śiva's relationship to Madurai devotees, and it provides new ways to understand divine action.

Kinship relations are established in three ways: by birth, adoption, and marriage. Each of these methods is used, explicitly or implicitly, in *Śiva's Sacred Games* to express Śiva's relationship to the Pāṇḍyas and their Madurai kingdom. We have seen that once Śiva marries into the Pāṇḍya family, the event constitutes an alliance not just with the goddess, but also with her father, King Malayadhvaja Pāṇḍya, and by extension, with the people in this Madurai kingdom. Śiva becomes the son-in-law (*marukaṉ*) of the king, but he does more than assume the status of superior son-in-law; he assumes the throne, and naturally so, for he who marries the queen becomes king. Implicitly, in effect and in function, Śiva also becomes the adopted son of the king, inheriting the authority over Malayadhvaja's kingdom. True, Śiva is never explicitly called "the king's son."[13] It would be less than reverent to do so. Sons are inferior to their fathers in a way that sons-in-law are not inferior to their fathers-in-law. Still, the text makes it clear that the husband of a sonless man's daughter is his father-in-law's legal heir (*TVP* III.64.1ff.). Later, the kinship alliance between Śiva and the Madurai Pāṇḍyas is firmly established with the birth of Ugra, son of Śiva and Mīnākṣī. The office of king is passed on to Ugra Pāṇḍya, and all legitimate Pāṇḍya kings thereafter are related to Śiva by birth, consanguinally.

Without the marriage neither the implied adoption nor the explicit legitimate accession of Ugra to the throne would have been possible. The marriage constitutes the sine qua non of the alliance between the Madurai Pāṇḍya king and Śiva. This marriage, like the short-term *nērttikaṭaṉ*, constitutes a quid pro quo agreement: in return for Śiva's presence in the city, a presence which implies guidance, protection, and blessing, Śiva receives the king's most beloved possession: his only offspring, the rightful heir to his throne, and a very eligible virgin. One obvious but significant difference between the *nērttikaṭaṉ* and a kinship alliance is that the latter continues indefinitely. The kinship alliance only begins with the "offering of a virgin" (*kanyādāna*); later, the alliance will entail an elaborate series of perpetual rights and obligations. In the marriage between Mīnākṣī and Śiva, in fact, the rights and obligations are reaffirmed each year with the annual recelebration of the marriage ritual.

Sustaining the Marriage Metaphor

It is one thing to find a literary document that describes the marriage of deities, that occasionally uses terms such as "son-in-law," or "spouse" to refer

to deities. It is quite another to demonstrate that these terms are relevant beyond the action and plot of the text, in the religious worldviews of millions of Hindus who acknowledge that the text and/or its narratives are in some sense sacred. We have seen in chapter four that the annual festival celebration of the marriage of Mīnākṣī and Śiva, for the vast majority of devotees, "operationalizes" the text's marriage metaphor. The festival and the sacred marriage metaphor reinforce each other. The festival lends experiential and ritual substance to the metaphor by reenacting it. Conversely, the marriage metaphor allows people to interpret ritual events coherently. It provides the conceptual framework for understanding the events, and it does so in large part by assigning to the deities involved in the festival appropriate kinship terminology. The sacred marriage of Madurai is, as Fernandez has put it, a "performative metaphor," a metaphor that "provides organizing images which ritual action puts into effect" (101). Though I think it is a bit of an exaggeration to say that "the study of ritual is the study of the structure of associations brought into play by metaphoric predications" (102), I believe such an enterprise is important in any attempt to understand religious action. The question at stake is this: How far beyond the text and the festival do associations stemming from the sacred marriage metaphor extend? To put it another way, What is the extent to which the marriage metaphor may be sustained, indeed, ought to be sustained by those seeking to understand its meaning to devotees?

In chapter one, I have tried to show that metaphors, when they are sustained, can reveal new realities. They are not literal statements, certainly, but neither are they flowery flights of the imagination, decorative but meaningless. They have meaning in large part because they invite us to think about one subject in the context of another. They propose a way of conceptualizing which may well provide valuable insight and, at the least, they permit us to think about the less familiar in terms of the more familiar. This is why it makes sense—indeed why it is necessary if we are to say much at all—to use metaphors and to sustain them when we speak about more abstract matters: religion, personal relationships, the nature of electrical "current," or of light "waves." This is why, too,

> it is an important feature of metaphor that, if the metaphor is a good one, in appreciating it one goes well beyond the bare formulation of the utterance. . . . This is to respond to the dynamism of a good metaphor; . . . appreciation of the metaphor involves more than the simple given. [Soskice, 18–19]

Based on what we know of Tamil religion, kinship, and devotional traditions, it makes sense to sustain the sacred marriage metaphor, to speak about the implications—not just ritual or literary, but theological and devotional—of Śiva's and Mīnākṣi's sacred marriage, using kinship terms to understand those implications. We have already seen how sustaining the marriage metaphor makes ritual and literary "sense," that is, we have seen how a mythic narrative, what I have called in chapter four "the lay myth," can be based on what devotees

might expect to occur in the process of and as a result of a Tamil marriage ceremony. The lay myth uses the context of human marriage to understand the series of ritual events involving deities. Inasmuch as it does this, it uses the marriage metaphor and sustains it: the sequence of ritual events can thereby be explained as a set of serially related occurrences where one event naturally follows or causes another. In this process of interaction between the context of local understandings about marriage on the one hand and the context of ritual events on the other, kinship terms are generated in reference to the images of deities used in the festival. These kinship terms supplement or "flesh out" the identities the deities already have. Similarly, we have seen how the account of the sacred marriage of Mīnākṣi and Śiva constitutes the focal point of the plot in *Śiva's Sacred Games*. It binds the action together just as the marriage binds Śiva to his Pāṇḍya "relatives."

The sacred marriage metaphor lends coherence and unity to otherwise disparate ritual events; it also provides narrative continuity for a literary work. But the influence of the metaphor in question extends much further. It, and the sustained kinship metaphors it generates, take on a life of their own apart from the ritual events they splice together and apart from the document from which they come. The festival ritual (when it is understood as a reenactment of a sacred marriage) and the mythology of *Śiva's Sacred Games*, taken together, create and reinforce a conceptual reality for devotees, a reality which devotionally and theologically makes sense. More accurately, perhaps, the Madurai wedding festival and its associated mythology create and reflect a community with a shared understanding. This community of people, in sharing the marriage metaphor and its implications, share a conceptual reality that has ongoing devotional significance.

As I indicated in chapter one, metaphors both reflect and generate a sense of community among those who share them. How far the marriage metaphor may be sustained, and what it means when it is sustained, is largely a matter of the community context in which the people who use the metaphor participate. For example, not all Hindus who hear the metaphor describing Śiva as a son-in-law will understand the same thing. Śiva is also referred to as a son-in-law in Sanskrit texts originating in areas where cross-cousin marriage is not the norm: Śiva is portrayed in several texts as son-in-law to Himavat in his marriage to Pārvatī, Himavat's daughter (*Vāmana Purāṇa* 26.52–53 and *Śiva Purāṇa* III.23), and as son-in-law to Dakṣa in his marriage to Satī, Dakṣa's daughter (*Kūrma Purāṇa* 1.14.4–97). But the northern son-in-law is quite different from the Tamil son-in-law. In each of these northern marriages there is considerable animosity and tension between Śiva and his father-in-law (see chap. 4, "Śiva and Viṣṇu in Conflict and Reconciliation"). Śiva rudely insults Himavat and his wife at every opportunity, and he ends up beheading Dakṣa. The northern kinship system provides a context for understanding what this impudence and violence are about: the cordial but formal relations we find among in-laws in the south do not seem to exist in the north. Northern in-law relations are

more strained, for they are not characterized by the continuing system of marriages whereby family alliances tend to be reaffirmed by repeated unions of cross-cousins (see chap. 4, "The Festival and Dravidian Kinship Relations"). To speak of a deity as a son-in-law in northern India would make no sense unless, of course, you wanted to speak of that deity in unambiguously adversarial terms. And this is precisely what happens in the northern and Sanskritic mythologies of Śiva's marriages to the daughter of Himavat in one case and of Dakṣa in another. In each, the family of Śiva's in-laws is portrayed as having Vaiṣṇava preferences. They are Śiva's in-laws, but they are not his devotees. Indeed, in much of the north, Vaiṣṇavas tend to be predominant, and Śiva is regarded—especially in the northern Sanskritic mythology—as an irresponsible, philandering, cannabis-smoking ascetic (Archer 1985, 61, 65, 66).

Similarly, Hindus of northern India do not comprehend how the term "brothers-in-law" might be an apt description for the relationship between Śiva and Viṣṇu (chap. 4, "The Festival and Dravidian Kinship Relations"). In northern India a man's brother-in-law is not especially significant. The kinship term has no strong structural or emotional associations and is not deemed a particularly relevant way to describe relationships between the two major Hindu deities.

It is also possible that some people in the community where a metaphor is found may understand it but choose not to use it. Vaiṣṇavas of the south may understand what it means to refer to Śiva and Viṣṇu as brothers-in-law, but they may avoid or even reject it. That part of the Tamil south in which a brothers-in-law relationship between Śiva and Viṣṇu is posited tends to be where the Śaiva religion—where the worship of Śiva—is predominant. In any southern brothers-in-law relationship there is always a superior and an inferior. According to the southern Hindu tradition, Śiva receives his wife from Viṣṇu. This means, in the south at least, that Śiva is superior, and for this reason the worshippers of Śiva are much more interested in promoting the use of this kinship term to describe the Śiva-Viṣṇu relationship. Vaiṣṇavas living in Śaiva-dominated areas tend to acquiesce to the term as an accurate description of the way things are. However, predominantly Vaiṣṇava communities reject the term altogether.

Janet Soskice's analysis of the close relationship between a metaphor and the community in which the metaphor occurs and is sustained may be helpful here. She indicates that speakers are members of a linguistic community, a community whose collective experience exceeds that of any individual. In her words, "communities of interest," whether scientific or religious, "are bound by shared assumptions, interests, and traditions of interpretation, and share a descriptive vocabulary" (150). She insists that what the terms used by a community signify must be assessed in the context of the community in which they are found. This does not mean that when devotees speak of an event such as a "sacred marriage of the deities," or of a deity as a "son-in-law," they will all necessarily mean the same thing. Within the community of faith and tradition

these terms are likely to evoke certain associations, and for some the associations will be more vivid, more meaningful, and more sustainable. People use these terms

> because they belong to a community and tradition of faith which contains authoritative members for whom the term does denominate a particular experience. There is an element of trust involved in relying on others whose experience is wider than one's own, yet in almost all areas of life this is the perfectly rational enterprise of using the wider resources of the community to extend one's own, and necessarily limited, experience and expertise. . . . The great divine and the great poet have this in common: both use metaphor to say that which can be said in no other way but which, once said, can be recognized by many. [151–53]

If the kinship terms used to describe deities have devotional and theological import for devotees, how may that import be understood or described? In the paragraphs that follow, I shall suggest some possibilities. Rather in the spirit of *Śiva's Sacred Games*, I will want to play with the metaphors a bit, exploring how the limits of the marriage metaphor might be pushed even further, might suggest additional metaphoric possibilities for devotees. I shall call these possibilities "devotional options." They provide a range of choices, a range of possible images or models for understanding divine activity and the relationship humans might have to it.

Roof and Roof have shown that the Judaeo-Christian deity may be conceptualized through a variety of images such as Creator, Healer, Friend, Redeemer, Father, Judge, and King. And they have shown that several different images may be held simultaneously by the same devotees. Similarly, not all of the kinship terms discussed below will necessarily be meaningful for all or even a majority of devotees. They are possible choices, and in this sense, they provide devotional options.

Because I am discussing here the implications of kinship metaphors for personal devotion, I should point out that I use the word *personal* in two senses. First, the options are personal because kinship terms in their normal context refer to persons and to relationships among persons. In this sense, kinship terms cast deities in roles normally played by persons. Kinship terms are necessarily personal in that they invite us to think of deities as though we were thinking of persons.

Given an acceptable range of possible devotional options, individual devotees or communities may make more or less "personal," or individually specific choices. This is the second sense in which I use the term. Particularly when affinal or "in-law" terms are involved, there is a strong sense that options are involved in forging an alliance with a deity, just as options are involved in the choice of a spouse. The choices are personal in that they are specific, individual, relatively freely chosen from among a given range of possibilities.

The Devotional Options

Option One: Mīnākṣi Is a Daughter to the Madurai Kingdom

From the point of view of the people of Madurai—as they are portrayed in *Śiva's Sacred Games*—Mīnākṣi's birth constitutes the initial appearance in their midst of a deity with whom they have a kinship tie. This, as we have seen, occurs in the fourth chapter, "The Chapter of the Sacred Incarnation of the Lady Taṭātakai." Mīnākṣi is born miraculously as the daughter of the king and queen. To emphasize the literal fact, at the moment of Mīnākṣi's birth from the sacrifice the queen's breasts overflow with milk, and the three-year-old girl sits in the queen's lap, thereby confirming her own position as daughter. By extension, Mīnākṣi becomes the adored daughter of the kingdom. Throughout *Śiva's Sacred Games* we find references to Mīnākṣi as a beloved daughter: growing up in the kingdom, charming, competent, she flowers into a full-grown woman by the beginning of "The Chapter of the Sacred Marriage."

Just as we find in the cycle of mythology surrounding the early life of the more famous male deity Kṛṣṇa a body of devotional literature which dotes on him as a child, an ever-loveable baby, and an occasionally naughty boy (e.g., Hawley); and just as Christmas, one of the most celebrated of the Christian holidays, focuses on Jesus as the innnocent, adorable, perfect baby, so we find in much of the material on Mīnākṣi a tendency to focus on her and to worship her as a child. Indeed, probably the most important devotional work written exclusively about Mīnākṣi, "The Childhood Cycle of Tamil Stories about Mīnākṣi" (*Mīṉāṭciyammai Piḷḷait Tamiḻ . . . .*), is a carefully wrought narration of how this young girl passes through the various stages of childhood. Then, as a mature daughter of the city, she attracts to it a very handsome and powerful husband and ally. Without her the alliance with such a great son-in-law would be impossible. Of course, the textual tradition seeks to subordinate her to her husband. But the fact is that Madurai devotees know that she is "one of theirs." If the Madurai temple is important to them, it is important first because she is the one who resides there. The daughter of the Madurai kingdom links the people of the kingdom with the great deity Śiva in much the same way the Dravidian daughter of one family, by means of her marriage, links that family with a superior lineage (see chap. 4, "The Perspective of the Center and the Role of the Female"). Seen as a daughter, the divine becomes much more accessible and far less threatening. Devotees, in fact, almost always will approach Mīnākṣi in worship first. Indeed, a majority will approach her exclusively. In matters requiring Śiva's attention, she becomes a devotee's sympathetic emissary to him.

Option Two: Śiva Is a Son-in-Law to the Madurai Kingdom

Although the term *son-in-law* (*marukaṉ* or *marumakaṉ*) as a description for Śiva

is, to the best of my knowledge, unique to *Śiva's Sacred Games* (I.5.122; I.5.150; I.8.4), it is a reference which makes sense and fits the circumstances in other temple place-histories of southern India. As David Shulman (1980, 138–40) has pointed out, the common pattern in many Tamil temple histories—he lists Kāñcipuram, Nākapaṭṭiṉam, Tiruvāṉaikkā, and Aṇṇamalai— is to trace the origin of Śaiva temples to the arrival of Śiva in the particular place where the temple is located. And in most cases, Śiva is attracted to the site by a local, autochthonous goddess. There are two such occasions in the text: one is, of course, his marriage with Mīnākṣi. In the second, he marries the daughter of the king of a fishing community on the coast.[14] In both cases he appears as a superior son-in-law who deigns to marry a local female luminary, a "favorite daughter" of the locale. In contracting this marriage, in being drawn to that particular spot and that particular bride, Śiva is entering into a formal, deliberate, covenantal relationship with his new bride's "people," who are the local folk. He then assumes both the responsibilities and privileges which are incumbent on the good son-in-law in his relations with his wife's kin. In both instances mentioned here, he saves the community governed by his new wife's father or lineage from certain disaster, bestows on the family of his wife special, divine blessings, and guarantees his future assistance when circumstances require it.

What might this image of Śiva as son-in-law mean for devotees? What implications might it have for the way Śiva is worshipped and perceived? The term has at least six implications for deity-devotee relations.

First, given the traditional framework for Hindu marriage arrangements, it is important that parties to the marriage arrangement have choices. Indeed, typical of Hindu marriage negotiations is their tentative, fragile character: any inadvertent slight or misunderstanding can endanger them. This is true for humans (Fruzetti, 29–34) as well as deities (*Śiva Purāṇa* III.48.49). For this reason, to describe a devotee's relationship to a deity as an in-law relationship is to assert that there are choices involved on both sides. It is one way to represent the notion that devotees choose their deities by selecting from among the pantheon of millions of divinities their own *iṣṭa deva,* their "preferred deity." Similarly, deities also select those devotees to whom they choose to reveal themselves. In using this affinal term for Śiva, devotees acknowledge, at some level, the element of choice in devotion to Śiva.

Second, the term suggests a long-term contractual alliance between Śiva and the local populace, the sort which would assure people of Śiva's help whenever he is needed. Just as any good son-in-law in the south is expected to be a reliable ally during times of trouble, the local temple place-histories of several Tamil temples portray Śiva in precisely this way. Absent (or at least less visible) during times of prosperity, he appears dramatically when trouble is brewing, such as when neighboring enemy kings become too aggressive, local kings become too complacent, or vicious Jain heretics invade the countryside. The term places Śiva, particularly in his local form as Sundareśvara, in a very special

and a mutually beneficial relationship with people of the Madurai kingdom. The term implies a covenant based on Tamil understandings of kinship responsibilities and obligations.

Third, the relationship is rather formal: the in-law term allows for contractual clarity between devotee and deity. To become an in-law with a deity is to enter into an explicitly covenantal relationship with that deity. The covenant is unwritten, it is true, but that is because its stipulations are a matter of common knowledge and agreement. The "in-law" relationship implies a much less direct emotional attachment than does a relationship that addresses the deity either as "Father" or "Son." As Hindus of the Tamil south can attest, emotional involvement with a deity—as with a human—involves a certain amount of risk. It can be dangerous, and for many is rather unappealing. In some cases, it means forsaking all other emotional attachments for the price of a loving relationship with the Lord (Ramanujan 1972, 11–14). In a land where one of the words for "religion" is *matam*, a term which also implies "madness," "possession," and "intoxication," it would not be difficult to find devotees who prefer to seek models for devotion other than those inspired by such great, but excessively eccentric figures as Māṇikkavācakar (Yocum 1982). It is easier, and more appealing for many, not to be too closely related to the divine.

Fourth, in any Tamil in-law relationship there are clear understandings, and one of these is that in exchange for the son-in-law's (or deity's) constant willingness to assist in times of trouble, his wife's family (or devotees) owe him significant reverence and respect. This respect begins at the time of the wedding, when even the human son-in-law is worshipped as a deity by the bride's family (Srinivas 1942, 72; Beck 1964, 141; Orenstein, 50; Gupta, 88; Archer 1985, 111). After the wedding, a man's in-laws are obligated to make occasional visits to his home and to offer special gifts of food. In a religious sense such obligations would be met by the visits of Śiva's kin to his local temple where he is offered four times a day, during the *pūjā* ceremony, special gifts of food and money by his devotees, his figurative "in-laws."

Fifth, seen as a son-in-law, the deity can be regarded with some sense of mutuality. He is far more approachable, and therefore far more understandable. The son-in-law is younger, and, in this sense, inferior to his parents-in-law. But he is socially and ritually superior, given the normal rules for female hypergamy. Usually, social and ritual status outweigh the age deficit to render the son-in-law superior. But at least he may be reckoned with more easily than might a stern male parent. He can be prevailed upon, argued with, even occasionally abused a bit, or ignored. Consistent neglect or abuse would, of course, be dangerous, as many of the episodes from the temple histories make clear. But neglect will rarely mean disaster, and "family feuds" of this sort can be repaired over time.

Finally, to place oneself in a parent-in-law relationship to the deity is to make significant claims for one's own high status and acceptability. True, "wife-givers" are inferior to "wife-takers" in the hierarchy of kinship exchange, but

"wife-givers" cannot be too far inferior: when a caste or a subcaste desires to improve, by changing, its social and ritual status, one of the most acceptable and effective ways to do so is, "by giving daughters as brides . . . to the men of the next higher caste or sub-caste" (Karve, 7). Giving a daughter to a deity, a member of the "next higher" caste, is clearly a public statement about one's own social and ritual status. And so, to regard a deity as a son-in-law is to assume divine airs, but it is to do so in full recognition that there are clear obligations and responsibilities on each side.

Option Three: Viṣṇu (as Aḷakar) and Mīnākṣi Are Brother and Sister; Viṣṇu and Śiva Are Brothers-in-Law

There is a pervasive tradition, in both the north and the south of India, that describes Viṣṇu as the brother of a goddess (see chap. 4, "The Festival in the Perspective of Textual Hindusim"). In some cases the goddess is a strictly local phenomenon, and in some she is explicitly regarded as the wife of Śiva. Nowhere in *Śiva's Sacred Games* do we have a direct statement that Viṣṇu is a sibling of Mīnākṣi. But our commentator is quick to indicate in his explication of the verse that describes the marriage's climactic "water-pouring ceremony" (I.5.178.) that Viṣṇu performs the ceremony because he is the bride's brother. Local tradition and mythology take the brother-sister relationship for granted. Temple sculptures depicting the marriage clearly portray Viṣṇu in the traditional bride's brother's role, pouring water over the hands of the bride and groom.

The metaphor describing Śiva as a son-in-law is one which tends to focus on his relationship to devotees, the people of the Madurai "kingdom." The metaphors whereby Viṣṇu and Mīnākṣi are siblings and Viṣṇu and Śiva are brothers-in-law differ in an important way: they are concerned with relationships among deities instead of between deities and devotees. In this case, at least, kinship terms that serve to sort out interdeity relationships tend also to provide models for the way devotees of one tradition may understand deities and devotees of another. When the deities involved have their discrete groups of adherents, the kinship relations posited between deities may well serve as models for the way one group of adherents might deal with the other group and with that other group's deity.[15]

What does it mean to devotees that Viṣṇu and Mīnākṣi are perceived as siblings? First, it means that devotees of Viṣṇu, and particularly those who put significant emphasis on their sectarian affiliations, have some basis for worshipping Mīnākṣi. In interviews, Vaiṣṇava devotees who had worshipped Mīnākṣi during the Citrā Festival mentioned her sibling relationship with Viṣṇu as either a reason or a justification for their acts (chap. 4, "A Local Temple Affair"). On a broader scale, however, the claim that Viṣṇu and Mīnākṣi are siblings is a rather vivid way to say that the city whose patron deity is Mīnākṣi is a city that legitimately includes Vaiṣṇava devotees and their Vaiṣṇava deities. There is a sense in which Mīnākṣi, though married to Śiva, transcends strict sectarian

lines because she is a topocosmic deity first and a Śaiva deity second. Indeed, several authors are convinced that Mīnākṣī was originally a powerful local goddess incorporated late in her own developmental history into the pan-Indian pantheon by means of her marriage to Śiva. To say that Mīnākṣī is a sister of Viṣṇu makes her accessible to devotees of Vaiṣṇava deities in a way that might not otherwise be perceived by strict Vaiṣṇavas as possible. The metaphor expands the sense of religious community by subordinating Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava distinctions, particularly during the annual Madurai Citrā Festival. When Viṣṇu, as Aḻakar, approaches Madurai during the Citrā Festival, he is worshipped by Śaiva devotees; and during the wedding celebration in the temple, a statue of Viṣṇu is present.

A second implication of this brother-sister kinship metaphor is that Viṣṇu has a close relationship to Mīnākṣī's father, King Malayadhvaja Pāṇḍya. Indeed, if Mīnākṣī is Viṣṇu's sister then Viṣṇu is the king's son. I have neither heard nor read of any tradition that makes such a claim. However, the local history of the Viṣṇu Temple of Aḻakarkōvil accords a very special role to Malayadhvaja Pāṇḍya. He is, in a sense, the "father" of the temple: he built it. Even more relevant, the temple history accords him divine origins for he is said to have been born miraculously out of a Vaiṣṇava sacrifice performed by the king of the Pāṇḍya capital at Maṇalūr (Hudson 1982, 121).[16]

The more important kinship metaphor which emerges out of the sibling relationship posited of Viṣṇu and Mīnākṣī is that generated by Mīnākṣī's marriage. Śiva and Viṣṇu are understood to become brothers-in-law. Unlike that found in northern India, the relationship between brothers-in-law in southern India is a close one, characterized by dependance, tension, and a certain amount of mutual respect (see chap. 4, "The Festival in the Perspective of Dravidian Kinship"). In a society where cross-cousin marriage is practiced, a man's wife's brother, though structurally inferior, exercises significant power over the marriage arrangements that will be made for his sister's and his brother-in-law's children. The metaphor is vivid. It represents graphically in kinship categories the mutual competition, hostility, and dependence between Śiva and Viṣṇu as it is often portrayed in the pan-Indian *purāṇas*. It also represents the same sort of ambivalence we find historically between Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas. Both are Hindu communities, but the tension between them is quite real, and is reflected in general practices of ritual and social avoidance. From the point of view of personal devotion, this in-law relationship tells devotees—both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava—that the "other deity," the one to whom the devotee does not owe primary allegiance, must still be reckoned with, and taken seriously. That part of the Tamil south in which a brothers-in-law relationship between Śiva and Viṣṇu is posited tends to be where the Śaiva tradition is predominant. In other words, it is primarily among Śaivas, or in regions where Śaivas are predominant, that Śiva and Viṣṇu are regarded as brothers-in-law. This is because, as we have seen, the dynamics of the relationship cast Viṣṇu in a decidedly inferior role.

These two affinal or "in-law" metaphors (Śiva as "son-in-law," Śiva and Viṣṇu as "brothers-in-law") organize perceptions and suggest ways of seeing which give the Hindu communities of the Madurai area a very specific identity. A devotional text that praises the divine as a son-in-law or as a brother-in-law leaves many Westerners puzzled. It might make sense to speak of the divine as a son-in-law in northern India, but even there people could not understand *devotion* to a son-in-law: fear, perhaps, or even disdain, but not devotion. Similarly, to describe Śiva and Viṣṇu as brothers-in-law in northern India would not be very meaningful, for in the north of India brothers-in-law have very little to do with one another. One is clearly inferior, one is clearly superior, and the tension we find in texts that portray Śiva and Viṣṇu in the north would not be accurately reflected in the way northern brothers-in-law deal with each other. The metaphor simply would not work. Only among Tamils who practice cross-cousin marriage would this affinal language make sense as a way of talking about the two deities. And, of course, it is the marriage of Śiva and Mīnākṣī which generates these affinal terms.

Option Four: Mīnākṣī and Śiva Are Spouses to Each Other and Parents to Devotees

When Mīnākṣī and Śiva wed, the text makes it clear that a momentous event is occurring. This, the greatest of the pan-Indian, Sanskritic deities, marries a Tamil, Pāṇḍya queen. A young, unmarried queen is an anomaly, indeed, an impropriety, as her mother points out. In marrying her, Śiva bestows legitimacy in three symbolic ways: he provides the kingdom with a king, the normal state of affairs; he lends the local, Pāṇḍya Tamil Kingdom the legitimacy which Sanskritic associations provide, and he provides the means by which Mīnākṣī is transformed from a three-breasted freak into a two-breasted queen, woman, and mother. The two become king and queen, husband and wife. And yet, as we have seen, while the text consistently presents Śiva as superior, benevolent, and gracious in wedding her, there are oblique references to Mīnākṣī's defeating him in battle before the marriage (chap. 3, "Motifs of the Madurai Marriage . . . ."). Unlike what we find in the text, the popular conception of the nature of this marriage relationship is that Mīnākṣī is dominant. After all, as the text itself admits, the kingdom belonged to her originally: "She graciously gave him her crown" (*TVP* I, Kaṭavuḷ Vāḻttu,11). Śiva is an outsider in this sense, and his affections for the Pāṇḍyas deserve at least some suspicion. Occasionally he has even been known to take the side of Cōḷa monarchs who are in conflict with the Pāṇḍyas (II.34.1–30). The fact that is all-important, though, is the fact of Mīnākṣī's marriage to Śiva. As a marital pair, they represent, for devotees, a model couple, very much as parents represent for their children a model for marriage.

Among Tamilians, there are at least three conscious, named "models" for marriage, each patterned after and named for a different way Śiva is said to

interact with a particular wife (Daniel 1980). What Tamils call the Citamparam marriage is based on the mythology associated with the famous Saiva Temple of Citamparam. It is a marriage in which the male is regarded as dominant, and the female is said to owe him absolute obedience. The text of *Śiva's Sacred Games* clearly takes this point of view when it describes the relationship between Mīnākṣī and Śiva. However, the second form of marriage, called "the Mīnākṣī marriage," is based on what devotees know to be the case in terms of the ritual and devotional dominance of Madurai's Mīnākṣī over Śiva. This model insists that the woman should be regarded as the head of the house. It is to her that all domestic prosperity owes its existence, and she should rule the man in most matters. The Mīnākṣī model for marriage among Tamils "sanctions the private exercise of power by the wife," who is "enjoined to control her husband and to make all the decisions in the family" (S. B. Daniel, 71–72). A third model, a compromise between these two, takes its name from the statuary that pictures the Śiva-Pārvatī marital pair as a union of two equally powerful figures: the androgynous Ardhanārī. According to the Ardhanārīśvara marriage, husband and wife must share authority. In their separate realms they are equally powerful, though each needs the other for completion.

Just as devotees may choose different, even conflicting kinship metaphors as devotional models, so Tamils are likely to choose different, even conflicting models for how they should understand their marriage relationship. Daniel points out that the choice of one of these models is frequently made on an ad hoc basis, depending on the situation and the predilections of the actors. For the greater number of Tamils, a consistent, inflexible, hard-and-fast model is less desirable because it allows less freedom to respond to changing circumstances. The text of *Śiva's Sacred Games* and the architecture of the Madurai temple reflect the Citamparam model for marriage. However the ritual patterns of the temple, and the common devotional understandings of devotees about how Mīnākṣī and Śiva interact reflect the Mīnākṣī model for marriage.

Of particular concern here is the tendency devotees have to regard Mīnākṣī and Śiva as parental figures and as models for marital styles. Indeed, one Tamil devotional pamphlet published by the Mīnākṣi-Sundareśvara Temple, entitled "An Explanation of the Truths of the Sacred Festivals," explicitly enjoins devotees to regard Śiva and Mīnākṣī as the model married couple (Pañcanatam Piḷḷai 1962, 9–10). That Mīnākṣī and Śiva may be regarded not only as one possible model for how spouses might act, but as parents to devotees, is a point that can be substantiated in a variety of ways. In *Śiva's Sacred Games* Śiva is depicted and addressed as a father. Initially, of course, he is father to Ugra, his son and the heir to the royal throne of the Pāṇḍyas. And he is addressed as a "father" by one particular devotee, Dharmin, who asks Śiva to intercede so that Dharmin can amass enough of a fortune to marry (III.52.85). Śiva even plays a parental role when he takes the form of a mother pig and feeds the baby piglets whose mother has been killed (II.46.1–18). Those piglets, of course, later become part-animal and part-human Pāṇḍya ministers, very

much as Ugra becomes a part-human and part-divine figure when he assumes his rule over the Pāṇḍya kingdom.

In his discussion of the initiation and consecration of priests in the Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvara temple, Fuller notes that the consecration ritual transforms the initiate into "a son of Śiva" (Fuller 1984, 29). As paradigmatic devotees, the priests become sons of the divine couple. Similarly, in his analysis of the divine family in the mythology associated with the Tiruvāṉaikkā Temple, Paul Younger establishes that the two sons of Śiva and Pārvatī represent the two basic models for possible types of devotion to the divine pair. Gaṇeśa epitomizes affectionate, wise devotion while Skanda represents passionate and active service (1982, 257–60). We also find reference to the divine couple as both father and mother in the devotional lyrics of Māṇikkavācakar. In some cases, Śiva is referred to as "father," in some he is referred to as "mother" and in still others, he, in company with Pārvatī, is extolled as "both mother and father" (Yocum 1976, 376–84).

If the parental metaphors are used frequently in reference to Śiva, they are used even more often in reference to Mīnākṣī. Throughout *Śiva's Sacred Games* she is referred to as "Mother Mīnākṣī" (*Mīṉāṭciammai*). As queen and unmarried daughter, she is normally called "Taṭātakai," but never is the title "mother" appended to "Taṭātakai." Only as Mīnākṣī, Śiva's wife, is she invoked in her maternal aspect. We have seen in chapters two and four that the figure of Mīnākṣī is regarded as more accessible, more available to devotees, both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava, than is that of Śiva. As a female and mother, her responsibilities are more concerned with nurturing and feeding rather than with maintaining a carefully ordered, hierarchical cosmos. Order and hierarchy appear to be the concern and responsibility of males, and especially of fathers. It is little wonder that given her greater accessibility, and a concern to nurture the devotees in her human family, she is perceived at the popular level to be more powerful, or at least more effectual. It is good to have Śiva available when order needs to be maintained, such as those times when the kingdom is attacked by Jains or Cōḻa kings, or threatened by serious internal disruption. Still, they are a pair. The two are male and female, god and goddess, parents to devotees, providers of protection and nurture.

Option Five: Śiva Is a Husband to Devotees

Certain devotees may choose to view Śiva as a spouse, rather than as a parent. In significant parts of the Hindu tradition, the ideal model of/for devotion to a deity is that of a wife's devotion to her husband (O'Flaherty 1980, 88–92). In fact, in the accounts of Pārvatī's marriage to Śiva in the Sanskrit texts, it is primarily through her austerities (*tapas*) and devotion to Śiva that she wins him as a husband. In *Śiva's Sacred Games* Mīnākṣī does not approach Śiva initially in devotion. Quite the contrary: she sets out to defeat him in battle. But once she sees him, she becomes the model woman and wife: bashful, passive, fear-

ful (*TVP* I.5.43). The example of Gaurī in the text, whose unwavering devotion to Śiva finally wins her a position as his wife, is more in keeping with the ideal (II.23.1–33). Śiva, fortunately, can handle several wives at the same time. Thus, devotees do not need to compete with Mīnākṣi for attention.

Using the devotional kinship metaphor of deity as husband/lover is not reserved for women only. Men may also adopt it, with particular effort exerted toward identifying with a female point of view. This is common, for example, among male worshippers of Kṛṣṇa. They identify with Rādhā, the wife of Kṛṣṇa, on the occasion of the annual ritual marriage of the god and goddess (Singer 1972, 201, 209–10; O'Flaherty 1980, 87–90). Marglin has noted that male priests in the temple dedicated to Jaganātha at Puri consider themselves to be acting as women: they do the work of women in serving the deity and preparing him food, they said, and so, in relation to the Lord, they become wives (1985, 71–72, 96). One famous devotee of the deity Rāma resolved to identify with Rāma's wife, Sītā. In his biography we are given a full account of how he eventually assumed a female form, and took a female name (*Vṛhad.*)

For obvious reasons the metaphor "deity as husband" would be much easier for heterosexual women to appropriate. In *Śiva's Sacred Games* we find direct suggestions of it when Śiva enters Madurai as the alluring bridegroom who drives the local women mad with desire (I.5.138). Because Hindu women are encouraged to regard their husbands as deities, to worship them and to fast for their benefit, it would not be unusual for female devotees to regard Śiva of Madurai as, in some sense, a husband. The Tamil term *nāyakaṉ* means both "god" and "husband," and it is often used in contexts which suggest an identification of the two meanings (e.g., Pañcanatam Piḷḷai 1962, 10).

Finally, when the metaphor "Śiva as husband," is appropriated, a devotee may well attempt to identify with Mīnākṣi, becoming in some spiritual sense the Lord's wife. This is what occurs at the annual Madurai Marriage Festival: married women ritually receive a new marriage necklace (*tāli*) just as Mīnākṣi does. When married women perform the marriage necklace renewal ceremony on the same day as Mīnākṣi's wedding, they make an explicit effort to identify with the goddess. And the ceremony itself confers special powers on their husbands (Reynolds 1980, 56). If the wife becomes Mīnākṣi, the husband becomes Śiva. Or, seen differently—and more in accord with the image of Śiva in *Śiva's Sacred Games*—Śiva graciously assumes the form of the woman's husband. In fact, this happens frequently in the story: he assumes the form of a woman's husband to defend her honor against the advances of a brash young swordsman (II.27.1–28). He also appears as an accomplished fisherman and husband to the daughter of the king of a fishing community (III.57.1–94). Perhaps most dramatically, he takes the form of a bangle seller whose touch impregnates the daughters of Madurai merchants. Though there is no wedding, these women who are enchanted by the handsome bangle seller in effect become Śiva's wives and bear his children (II.32.1–36).

The methods are various, but the results are similar: a woman can become

Śiva's spiritual spouse (like Gaurī), or she can identify with the goddess, who is his spouse (as in the marriage necklace ceremony). Śiva can take the form of a woman's husband, or the husband can be identified with Śiva. A man may choose to identify with the goddess, thus becoming a wifelike devotee. In certain cases, several of these mechanisms may operate simultaneously, and they will operate quite differently according to the personal, marital, and sexual orientations of devotees. But the results are the same: "Śiva is a beloved spouse."

Option Six: Mīnākṣī Is a Wife to Devotees

We have seen above that, as a wife, Mīnākṣī is perceived by devotees to be dominant over her spouse. As such, she is in a position to be revered by those who might choose to regard her as, in some sense, a spouse. We have also seen that in the second version of her marriage to Śiva in *Śiva's Sacred Games*, Mīnākṣī is brought to Madurai from another locale, and that Śiva is the local, indigenous deity, the one whose home is Madurai (III.57.1–64). Normal rules regarding village exogamy thus make it possible for Madurai devotees to deal with Mīnākṣī as a potential spouse. Furthermore, worshippers of Śiva who take seriously one of the more esoteric goals of devotion—the goal of becoming, even identifying with, the deity—will find themselves, to the extent that they are successful, in a position of being spouse to Mīnākṣī. Regarding this matter of identification with the deity more needs to be said here. One of the most clear-headed statements I have seen on the issue comes from C. J. Fuller's description of worship in the Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvara Temple, in which he deals with the problem of how it is possible for human beings to bridge the gap between the world of humans and that of deities:

> In Hinduism, in absolute contrast to the monotheistic religions, that problem is sought to be resolved by progressive identification of the worshipper and his god, so that the two can ultimately become one . . . . the immaterial and formless deity is brought into an image and served as if it had bodily needs. The god is "humanised" but, because the god's power is transmitted to the worshipper progressively identified with him, man is simultaneously "deified," a resultant most powerfully symbolized by the ritual's final element, the camphor flame. Its strong smell and bright light act directly on the human senses, but it is also a powerful metaphor for the immaterial, formless, spiritual qualities of the deity. Not only that, the flame rapidly dies out, symbolizing the transience of imperfect man's communication with the deities and requiring him repeatedly to attempt it. In other words, while it seeks to produce (or restore) an identity of god and man, worship simultaneously emphasizes their differences, because the identity cannot be sustained. [1984;14–15]

As a possible kinship metaphor, "Mīnākṣī as spouse" needs to be considered seriously. However, in reality, the metaphor poses problems. First, it is

problematic because polyandry (multiple husbands) is not permissible in India for women,[17] even though polygyny (multiple wives) is acceptable for men. To regard oneself as a spouse of Mīnākṣī is to declare oneself a competitor with Śiva for his wife's affections: a daring position indeed. Devotees might well be mindful of Śiva's angry, jealous reactions to attempts by his son to become him, to displace him in his relationship with his wife. In one myth, Gaṇeśa tries to bar his father from his mother's bathing chambers and is beheaded by Śiva as a result; there is clear competition here between Śiva and Gaṇeśa for the physical affections of the goddess (Dimmitt and van Buitenen, 179–85 and Courtright, 114–22). We also see this in *Śiva's Sacred Games*: Śiva flies into a cursing rage when his sons intervene on behalf of their mother in a quarrel between her and Śiva (*TVP* III.57.1–10). The message seems clear: one does not assume Śiva's role vis à vis Śiva's wife without taking considerable risk. In the Vaiṣṇava tradition, there seems to be more comfort with this possibility: neither Kṛṣṇa nor Viṣṇu is portrayed as being so jealous. Indeed, among the Sahajiyā of Bengal, identification with Kṛṣṇa in his erotic trysts with Rādhā is considered the ultimate devotional accomplishment (Dimock, 12–22).

The second reason why this metaphor is more problematic in the Śaiva tradition of Madurai is because Mīnākṣī is primarily regarded in popular devotion as the goddess of the city. Her initial and more important marriage with Śiva occurs in the context of her role as a Pāṇḍya daughter and queen. She is a daughter, and a mother, of the city. It is, in many ways, her town. For Madurai devotees to worship her as a spouse is, by this logic, a violation of rules of lineage and village exogamy. It suggests a form of incest. This is not to say that it is never done, only that it is far less common that the other options explored above.

Conclusions

I have isolated a particular phenomenon in religious studies, what has been called *hieros gamos*, or "sacred marriage," and I have studied its occurrence among Hindus in a particular temple city in southern India. Though I have made frequent references to the phenomenon in other parts of India and occasionally in other parts of the world, I have chosen to concentrate on one particular instance, the marriage of the deity Śiva (known locally as Sundareśvara) with the deity Pārvatī (known locally as Mīnākṣī) in Madurai. In the context of discussions concerning the Dravidian kinship system, Tamil literary history, an annual marriage festival celebration, conceptions of marriage among Hindus, and theories about literary metaphor, I have sought to establish the following propositions.

(1) The concept of "sacred marriage" in religious studies is more than a fertility image; it serves as a devotional metaphor. The metaphor generates sub-

sidiary metaphors which frequently take the form of kinship terms in reference to deities.

(2) The two kinship terms that seem to be specific to the Madurai area are "Śiva as son-in-law" and "Śiva and Viṣṇu as brothers-in-law." They are particularly appropriate in the context of the Dravidian and Tamil tradition of cross-cousin marriage. Indeed, it would be impossible to understand these terms without an analysis of the context of kinship relations in which they are found. Still, the sacred marriage metaphor is found throughout much of Hindu India, and it generates further devotional metaphors, including those that address deities as husband, wife, mother, daughter, and father.[18] The scope of this study has not extended to an analysis of what unique meanings these terms might have in other parts of Hindu India, but it is likely that a study of their specific nature in other Hindu contexts would reveal much more than we know now about devotion in Hinduism.

(3) The fact that kinship terms may be used in Hindu devotion suggests that among Hindus there can be a firm sense of kinship with deities, either through perceived birth, adoption, or marriage. The worlds in which humans and deities live are not, therefore, radically discontinuous. The relationship between humans and deities is regarded as mutual and reciprocal; it involves obligations and responsibilities on the part of each toward the other. One of the more graphic ritual statements to this effect occurs during "the Festival of the New Body" celebrated every twelve years in the Jagannātha Temple of Puri. On this occasion the wooden image of the deity is replaced with a new one, and the old one is given a funerary burial. The temple servants who perform both the funeral of the old statue and who carve the new one are the descendants of local indigenous tribals (*daitas*) from whom the deity Jagganātha is said to have come. They are specifically called his "blood relatives," and they alone must observe a period of ritual pollution required of the blood relatives of any deceased ancestor in the Hindu tradition (Marglin 1985, 243ff.). Seen in this perspective, deities are neither inaccessible nor inscrutable. Or, perhaps more accurately, they are about as inaccessible and inscrutable as are many of those relatives with whom we live and deal and on whom we depend every day.

For this reason we might wonder if, from the Hindu point of view, it is really accurate to claim that talk about deities is metaphorical after all. If there is no radical discontinuity between the human and the divine realms, are there really two distinct contexts—the one human, the other divine—which we are transposing when we use kinship terms to speak of deities? Can we have a transaction of contexts if we do not have two separate contexts? I argue that while the distinctions are not radical between humans and deities, they nevertheless exist. Though Brahmins, for example, are regarded as deities among humans, they are still regarded as human, despite the fact that, on occasion, they might receive treatment similar to that given images of deities in temples. Because there is a difference, at some level, between humans and deities, we may speak of these two separate contexts: the one human, the other divine. In

this sense, and for this reason, all discourse about deities is basically metaphorical. This does not mean that it is not true. It does mean that it is based on human experience, language, and conceptual categories. But then, how else is it possible to talk about the divine and still make human sense?

APPENDIX A.

Translation of Chapter Five of The Story of Śiva's Sacred Games "The Chapter of the Sacred Marriage"

Introduction to the Translation

The fifth chapter of *Śiva's Sacred Games* describes Mīnākṣī's conquest of the world when she reigned as a Pāṇḍya monarch, and her subsequent marriage to Sundareśvara (Śiva) in Madurai. Several allusions to mythic and literary themes in Indic literature appear, and some of the more prominent deserve brief mention at the outset. Parenthetic references in this introduction indicate relevant verses in the translation.

The Pāṇḍya kingdom was one of the three famous royal lineages of southern India: frequently the three are referred to as a triad. They are the Pāṇḍyas, whose flag bears the symbol of the fish, or, more specifically, the carp; the Cōḷas, represented by the tiger; and the Cēras, represented by the bow (18, 162). In addition, the Pāṇḍyas were associated with margosa flowers (18). Royal families often traced their lineages either through the sun or the moon; the Pāṇḍyas referred to themselves as descendants of the moon lineage (46). In times of trouble, each of the kingdoms expected to be able to field formidable armies, each army having four divisions: foot soldiers, elephant riders, cavalry, and charioteers (21). Taking plunder from neighboring defeated kings was an acceptable expression of dominion, and so we find that Mīnākṣī's army takes from the richest of kingdoms, that of Indra, king of celestials, his miraculous possessions which include a tree that grants all wishes (Wish-granting Tree), a jewel that gives fabulous wealth to its owner (Wealth-giving Jewel), and a cow which gives marvelous foods (Wish-granting Cow) (24).

The relationship between Sundareśvara and Mīnākṣī is treated in the context of common descriptions of male-female relationships in Indian literature. Often, the woman is depicted as a dependent, blossoming vine entwined around a firmer piece of wood, such as a tree, which is likened to the male and to the erect phallic symbol of Śiva, the *liṅga* (4, 41). We also find references to the divine as an androgynous entity which is neither exclusively male nor exclusively female, and represented iconographically by Ardhanārīśvara, that single image which is male on the right side and female on the left (42, 91). Good omens are associated with this right/left dichotomy: throbbing or twitching on the right side of the body for men and on the left side of the body for women are auspicious signs (50).

Women experiencing unrequited love display certain characteristics that betray their state. They become thin, so much so that jewelry and clothing fall from their immodest bodies (118). Moonlight, flowers, southern breezes, and sandalwood paste become physically painful (124); their bodies become unbearably heated, and change to a pale, golden color (126). The god of love (Kāma) often appears as an active agent when love and lust are involved. Like Cupid, he pierces his victims with arrows (123, 125, 199). Traditionally, it was he who once aroused Śiva from ascetic meditations. Angered by the interruption, Śiva burned Kāma to ashes, but later, at the plea of Kāma's wife, graciously restored him to life in bodiless form; Śiva is susceptible to

Kāma's influence, but he is more powerful than Kāma and by virtue of Śiva's grace Kāma remains active today (134).

When Śiva (Sundareśvara) and Pārvatī (Mīṇākṣī) are married, other deities play important roles. Nandin, Śiva's bull vehicle, is Śiva's chief assistant (29, 30, 36, 39, 40, 79). Traditionally, Pārvatī is the daughter of the king of the mountains, Mount Kailāsa (27, 62). Viṣṇu and Brahmā accompany Śiva to the wedding (111), always remaining his loyal worshippers. In the actual wedding ceremony Viṣṇu takes a prominent part by giving the bride away (176), but these great deities have a long history together. Once, in an attempt to determine Śiva's limits, Viṣṇu became a boar, diving in vain into the earth to find the base of Śiva's aniconic form, the *liṅga* (7). Brahmā, the presiding ritual officiant at the wedding (184, 185), has also had other encounters with Śiva, some less pleasant. One tradition describes how Brahmā, during the third cosmic cycle (*yuga*) carelessly and thoughtlessly destroyed the world. To make him less careless and more responsible, Śiva sent a group of his minions (*rudras*) to chastise Brahmā (83). If Brahmā and Viṣṇu accompany Śiva in the wedding, their wives, Sarasvatī and Lakṣmī, goddesses respectively of learning and wealth, assist the bride (171).

Throughout the chapter, Śiva remains the supreme deity. He pervades all things with his eight forms: the five elements of earth, water, fire, air, and sky, as well as the sun, the moon, and the soul (183). He is the source of all goodness since his wife Pārvatī produced the thirty two beneficent acts (*dharmas*) of charity and kindness out of some paddy which Śiva gave her (165). He saved the world when a deadly poison was churned out of the ocean, a poison which threatened to destroy even the gods. He drank it, and for that reason has today a darkened black-blue throat (95, 112, 132). He also destroyed the famed Triple Fort of the demons when the fort became an impregnable stronghold from which to visit evil on the rest of the world (25, 130, 140, 144). Śiva is the source of remarkable contradiction: on the one hand a great ascetic and yogi (185), but on the other a very alluring, handsome figure whose appearance drives women berserk (138). Iconographically, he and his servants are represented with snakes on their bodies (194, 83, 79). Śiva even uses cobras, which are believed to contain precious jewels in their hoods (68), for belts (42). The moon and the Ganges river are located in his hair (127). His third eye, in the middle of his forehead, is capable of burning anything to ashes (111, 114, 134, 198). But his gaze is also the source of grace and salvation (42, 153, 188, 190, 191). His purity is so great that devotees regard it an extraordinary privilege just to worship his feet: they wash them, drink and sprinkle on themselves water used to wash them, and take great joy in having his feet placed on their heads (29, 40, 94, 108, 146).

The descriptions of the preparations for and execution of the wedding may seem excessive, but they leave little doubt that the event carries extraordinary weight in the narrative. Lavish abundance suggests the auspicious and life-affirming qualities marriage implies: foods "of the five classes and six tastes," (that is, foods that are swallowed, munched, licked, drunk, and sucked, and which taste sweet, sour, salty, bitter, spicy hot, and astringent) are distributed (72). Kings come from many countries, and especially from all parts of India, including areas of the subcontinent mentioned in speculative cartography of the purāṇic tradition (marked by an asterisk), and even from Kolla, an ancient part of Tamiḻnāṭu believed to have been swallowed by the sea. *Mleccha* land is a catchall term for those lands where people are commonly born of mixed racial parentage (74, 75). Among the wedding guests that accompany Śiva are goblins of various sorts, minor deities and sages, as well as several of Śiva's minions (*rudras*) and servants (*gaṇas*) (82–84). "The twelve suns" are guests, too; because the sun rises each month in a different constellation, each separate, periodic, monthly rising is referred to as a separate sun (85).

Speculation among the townspeople about how events have led to this wonderful wedding includes an acknowledgement that the bride's father, Malayattuvacca Pāṇḍya, did not live to see his Daughter's marriage (121). They praise the wisdom of Mīnākṣī's chief minister Sumati who, greater even than Bṛhaspati, counselor to the gods (20), recalled the prediction about her future husband made on the day she was born (41, 122). The text indicates an awareness of the earlier *Śiva Purāṇa* account of Śiva's marriage to Pārvatī in the north: on that earlier occasion Śiva sent the sage Agastya to the south to balance the weight of the assembled multitudes (152). Great sages, we must understand, are disproportionately heavy.

In general outline, the rituals of the wedding resemble those prescribed for pan-Indian orthoprax marriages. The two exceptions include the uniquely southern custom of tying a marriage necklace on the bride (185) and, instead of straining with his wife to see the faint star, Alcot of the Great Bear, named Arundhatī ("Fidelity"), Śiva has the ability to call for her, to have her appear. Arundhatī is regarded as the wife of the sage Vasiṣṭha: traditionally bride and groom gaze at her (it) on the occasion of marriage because she symbolizes chastity and fidelity, as does the grinding stone (188).

Because I offer the translation with few notes, I have added occasional words or phrases for clarification, indicated by single brackets. Given a choice between extensive annotation and overtranslation, I choose the latter. In some cases, I include a helpful word or phrase which the commentator, Vēṅkaṭacāmi Nāṭṭār, has suggested. These appear in double brackets. In an effort to evoke the devotional tenor of the work, I have capitalized most epithetical and pronominal references to Śiva and Mīnākṣī.

The Chapter of the Sacred Marriage

(1) As best I can, I continue now to tell
of that world-renowned southern king's Daughter,
that beautiful maiden Taṭātakai,
who rules the earth surrounded by seas,
whose hair is adorned with divine, fragrant flowers:
She it is whom the bull-riding Lord married,
that world ruling Lord, the Lord whose dominion I praise.
(2) In the days when that great, bright, round god, the sun,
cast out the darkness of afflictions,
and the large, white, light-giving moon, like an umbrella,
beamed its splendid, spreading illumination:
it was then that the Mother who gave birth to all these great worlds
reigned as a Young Child and according to the Laws of Manu.
(3) Her golden red breasts grew large, firm.
Her waist narrowed to nothingness.
Her plait of black hair made the night's darkness seem white.
Like the melancholy music of the lute
were the soft words of our Lady who, with Her sweet smile,
had reached the age for a worthy marriage.
(4) She who gave birth to that statuesque Girl,
a Girl who was like a vine holding the cool moon for a face,
looked at her [Daughter] and said:
"You are like a vine so full of blossoms it bends down.
Though You are a fully grown virgin, You are still unmarried."
So it was that the Daughter heard Her mother's lament.
(5) "O Mother, what you hope for will occur at the proper time.

Please, don't worry. As for me, I will set forth
to establish my sovereignty over the eight directions
of the world surrounded by the seas.
Then I will return, but you remain here."
And as She spoke, this Lady,
this vine with flowers shining like gold,
rose and quickly departed.
(6) A garland of sweet, fragrant flowers adorned the hair
of the Lady whose divine intentions worthy rulers perceived.
They, ministers and others, all came.
A charioteer brought his mighty chariot, drawn by galloping horses,
into which She, the One born to dispel the world's afflictions,
ascended, while conch shells sounded.
(7) Drums—large and small—pounded.
Wooden drums, earthen drums, played.
Tapering drums, wide drums, war drums, jungle drums,
tom-toms, hollow bamboo drums,
trumpets and clarinets, horns and cymbals
all resounded throughout the directions.
(8) Women, their large breasts tightly bound by a cloth,
carried bows with arrows piercing-sharp as their eyes,
wielded strong shields and swords in their hands,
held sharp spears in their budlike hands:
these excellent bodyguards, like goddesses,
climbed with the Lady into Her mighty chariot.
(9) There were mighty golden chariots
their wheels spinning right and left,
tearing into the earth, reaching down
to the boundaries of the underworld.
Their broad battle plates shattered against
the vast eight directions,
and their banners reached high into heaven,
mopping up the waters of the celestial Ganges.
(10) There were [frenzied] elephants with large, thick trunks,
their rut pouring like waterfalls.
With their tusks dripping red blood
they ripped open the entrails of the lightning-filled clouds
and drank with their gaping mouths
the rainwater that flowed down.
Like the cruel passing of the god of death,
who in war wields a massive battle club,
were these great moving mountains.
(11) A flood of horses flowed in battalions, wave after wave,
resembling that single, galloping horse
that appears at the end of the world
to protect the world surrounded by roaring oceans.
Their gait was swift, but controlled, like the minds of yogis
who control their powerful breath.
(12) Warriors who have known only triumph,
honored with warriors' victory anklets,
who, if they found fault even with the fearless god of death,
would never return without seeing him flee,

carried spears dripping with poison more deadly than that
from the tooth of an open-mouthed snake,
and moved even faster than the wind.
(13) This flood of warriors, horses, chariots, and elephants
in untold numbers covered the earth.
Banners, peacock feathers, and white umbrellas
with wreaths of flowers: all obscured the sky.
Fine dust [they kicked up] hid the shining sun, the Lord's eye.
The great clamor [of it all] drowned out the sounds of the sea.
(14) Mighty sounds split the worlds:
sounds of chariots,
sounds of bridled horses galloping,
sounds of murderous elephants,
like dark clouds with white tusks,
sounds of warriors raising war cries,
their heads adorned with garlands,
their feet with noisy warriors' anklets;
sounds of the thumping of the mighty shoulders
of red-eyed, heroic warriors.
(15) The spreading, rising dust cloaked [all things], and
the sun disappeared as though he were hiding in the sea.
A great darkness filled the land as though night had come to stay.
Parasols covered with bright pearls, and handles of kings' swords
richly ornamented with diamonds
shone like the full moon [dispelling the darkness].
(16) Like ships, chariots traveled in rows.
Like waves, horses galloped in columns.
Like sounds of the sea, leather drums rolled.
Like glinting [silver] fish, brandished swords flashed aloft.
Like the ocean foam, a forest of garlandlike, yak-tail fans rose up.
Like clouds over the sea, rows of elephants went forward
as this sea of an army moved out.
(17) As women wearing flower garlands dripping with honey
danced, waving aloft a forest of flowing yak-tail fans;
as blessings chanted by Brahmins resounded on one side;
as sweet, clear melodies swelled up
the strong, gem-studded chariot passed by,
the chariot of our Mother,
Whose long [beautiful] earlobes are like vaḷḷai blossoms.
(18) The mighty flag bearing the fish,
the flag bearing the fierce, forest-dwelling tiger,
the great flag bearing the golden red bow,
and a forest of lovely peacock-feather fans:
all passed alongside the chariot of the Lady
with beautiful, dark, blue-lotus eyes,
red mouth, white teeth, soft shoulders,
hair adorned by margosa garlands
around which honeybees were buzzing.
(19) Her parasol resembled the moon that prays:
"You, Supreme Goddess, the Vedas praise with their many mouths,
but then grow weary and falter.
You, Daughter of our King of Kings,

how justly You rule, removing even the blemishes of earth.
Remove, then, the blemishes from the face
of this, Your servant."

(20) Sumati, who excels as a counselor
even the pleasing and luminous Bṛhaspati,
drove a large chariot up to the chariot of the Lady
with the eyes of a beautiful fish.
He understood the Lady's intentions and signaled with the staff
he waved in his hand for the four great armies to set out
as he followed in service [to Her].

(21) Wearing a dark mark on Her luminous forehead
She rendered indestructibly strong as Herself
the countless, sealike, four kinds of armies
so that they could advance onto the vast earth,
and onto other worlds as well, including the world
of the king of the gods.
She had set out to seize the wealth of kings.

(22) The might of the Gayapatis and other kings
who protect the northern lands
She wore down, then conquered.
She took as booty from her vanquished foes
female slaves, their eyebrows arched like the crescent moon,
their collyriumed eyes glinting like spears,
elephants, horses, chariots, too: abundant, priceless booty,
and then undertook Her conquest of the cardinal directions.

(23) Like ships moving on the sea pushed by a strong wind,
charioteers, wearing long warriors' anklets,
drove their chariots toward the armies
of that king of celestials.
But before She could begin Her game of war,
his courage failing, his strength dissipated,
the battle garland he wore falling to the ground,
Indra fled.

(24) An assembly of women with large, flirtatious eyes,
swelling breasts so large a thread would not pass between them,
so heavy they burdened the strength of slim waists;
Indra's white horse and white elephant, both dripping streams of rut;
the Wish-granting Cow;
that luxuriant, luminous Wealth-giving Jewel;
the divine Wish-granting Tree:
—All these things She captured as booty and took away.

(25) In the same way She advanced on the lords of the other directions,
diminishing their heroic power, conquering them,
taking tribute from them.
Then, prepared to conquer, She set out for Mount Kailāsa,
the mountain of the One who holds in His hand
the long, Mount-Meru bow
that once destroyed the Triple Fort [of the demons].

(26) Sounds of charging horses pulling Our Lady's mighty chariot;
of multiple, pounding war drums;
of elephants and chariots strong as the gods';
of galloping, excited horses;

of warriors;
stirring sounds—all—echoed
when she reached the towering mountain
that grows ever larger at the end of each age.
(27) The celestial Mount Kailāsa whose daughter had once left him,
but now was returning, cried flowing streams of
endless tears that roared with the sound of his welcoming,
"Come, dear child."
Like this She met him, smiling lustrously, beautifully,
as the two came together.
(28) As they approached the mountain,
trumpeting elephants charged ahead.
Heroic archers with strong bows and quivers on their backs
rushed about, shouting like the rising thunder
when they besieged the mountain.
(29) Watchmen of that great holy mountain ran, approached Nandin,
and worshipped his feet, feet difficult even for celestials
to attain and to worship.
They announced the news [of Her army's arrival].
Our father Nandin understood then the will
of the unfathomable Lord, the Lord whose feet
even the victorious [Viṣṇu as a] boar was unable to find.
(30) Nandin sent out the victorious warriors of Śiva.
Like a swarm of red crab's-eye seeds scattered in the clouds,
their gyrating, angry eyes glowing like fire,
they joined in battle the great army
of Her whose speech is sugarcane sweet,
as one sea would join another.
(31) The pandemonium of warriors who threw at each other
tridents, battle-axes, javelins, discuses,
missiles, short spears, swords, large clubs,
plowshares, and spears that dripped poison
was like the roaring of the ocean at the end of time.
(32) There were weapons thrown, weapons wielded, missiles shot:
some, soaked in red blood, still in motion.
Some missed their mark, and fell rolling.
Still others broke as they cut against bodies.
Their effects were like the results of actions in past lives.
(33) The winged bird vehicles of deities who came
to view this spectacle all fled in fear.
Animal vehicles and chariots of other deities
were obliterated by the armies' weapons.
The buffalo vehicle of the god of death vomited blood
like the buffalo demon slain by Durgā.
(34) Celestial singers traveling the heavenly path
to worship the One Who grants bliss and release
saw the fighting.
With their tender, affectionate wives,
whose soft feet are like sweet sprouts,
they feared harm,
and so took a different route to Mount Kailāsa.
(35) [The Armies] exchanged, each in return for the other:

missiles of the moon
for missiles of the sun,
missiles of sweet water
for missiles of raging fire,
missiles of the eight-legged Sarabha bird-lion-beast
for missiles of the mighty Nārasiṃha man-lion,
missiles of snakes
for missiles of the angry-eyed whirling wind.

(36) Forces devoted to Nandin, around whom the war raged,
found weapons in their hands beaten to dust
by the rain of arrows scattering
like angry-eyed snakes from a hole
[[that was the quiver]] of Our Gracious Lady,
in Whom a desire for the Lord of Wisdom
was awakening.

(37) Śiva's warriors, no longer with weapons, grabbed stones to throw.
But before they could throw them against Her armies,
that brave Woman flourished aloft
Her [invincible] thunderbolt spear
smeared with blood and fat,
a spear which obliterates [all things]
[as surely] as religious austerities done by evil people
are obliterated, [[and come to nothing]].

(38) She smashed to pieces the weapons of Śiva's warriors,
and when She attacked them with her club
they fled: utterly weakened, defeated.
How can we possibly measure the strength of this Woman
who created all things, moveable, immoveable,
and who is immanent in them?

(39) [Their] weapons, every last chariot, the garlands they wore,
the strength of their shoulders that surges in battle,
their rage and their mocking laugh,
that heroic, lionlike mien:
all this, utterly destroyed,
all this Nandin saw among those who returned.

(40) Worshipping the Lord's sacred feet, Nandin reported all this.
The Lord from whose matted hair flows the great flooding [Ganges]
smiled brightly.
Then this Lord who rides the virtuous, red-eyed bull,
whose bow and divine weapons bring victory in combat,
rose and went to the field of battle.

(41) As He approached the battlefield
His eyes fell upon the heroic acts and holy form
of the Goddess standing there: an incomparable lioness
who had not only made war on His warriors,
overpowering them, but remained, strength unspent,
prepared to defeat whoever might want to oppose Her.

(42) A single, long warrior's anklet on His foot,
a tiger skin garment held up by a snake for a belt,
a bright, victorious battle-axe in His hand,
decorated with white ash,
a sacred thread across His chest,

and locks of matted hair;
His holy, grace-bestowing gaze fixed on Her
when that One who was Her own right half
the woman Taṭātakai beheld before Her.
(43) The moment She saw Him Her [third] breast disappeared.
She became bashful, passive, and fearful.
She leaned unsteadily, like a flowering vine
bending under the weight of its blossoms.
Her ancient love [for Him] was rekindled and stayed with Her.
Her heavy dark hair fell on Her neck.
She looked down toward Her feet
with collyriumed eyes like those of the keṇṭai fish.
And there She stood, luminous as lightning,
scratching [shyly] in the earth with Her toes.
(44) She stood there like a tender vine
as Sumati, the sage versed in ancient wisdom, approached.
Worshipping Her small feet, he recounted the prophecy
Śiva spoke from the sky that day [She was born] and then said,
"Mother, this handsome Lord who wears the laburnum flowers
and the beautiful mat of hair is your husband."
Then, as He gazed on that love-filled, waiting One,
the Lustrous Lord of Light began to speak:
(45) "From the moment You started out
intending to triumph over the eight directions,
from that moment We and Our forces also left Madurai,
accompanying You all the way here.
On the coming Monday I will marry You at the auspicious hour,
and as prescribed in the Four Vedas.
Go, then, back to Your city!" He said.
(46) Surrendering to the Lord who said these things
Her life and Her love, and surrounded by female attendants,
She climbed into her mountain-like chariot
as war-drums beat like the pounding of the sea.
Passing over divine mountains and holy rivers,
this Woman who shone like the very light of the moon lineage
reached the great wedding city of Madurai.
(47) The Young Woman Ruler, welcomed by those
bearing the eight auspicious objects,
entered her great palace stronghold
with the divine wealth that had fallen to Her.
Then, palm-leaf wedding invitations were written and sent everywhere.
Ministers made arrangements for appropriate wedding details;
and everywhere in this beautiful city, from atop an elephant,
wedding drums resounded.
(48) The moment the Lady's wedding drums sounded
those who dwelled in that fortified city
boundlessly rejoiced, praising God with their hands clasped,
feeling goosebumps on their bodies, and singing praises.
As ornaments improve the beauty of women naturally beautiful,
so all of this city's sweet, natural beauty
they made more beautiful as they began to decorate it.
(49) Women and men cleared away the [growing] accumulations

of flower garlands mixed with sandalwood paste.
To control the rising dust they sprinkled cool, sweet rosewater.
Because of the joyous confusion
the wedding of the queen was causing,
they went about their work unaware that their own ornaments:
earrings, bangles, and necklaces, were all slipping off.
(50) People asked each other, "What day will the wedding occur?"
Those who said it would be the coming Monday,
the people embraced immediately.
They overflowed with the joy of difficult anticipation.
The passing of the six days before next Monday would be like the
passing of six cosmic ages.
"Is it [in anticipation] to see the Lady's wedding
that our shoulders are twitching?" they asked.
(51) They whitewashed walls and set up in rows
paintings that would please even expert painters.
Smearing cosmetic paste on veranda floors, they set up rows
of golden water pots filled with sprouting seedlings
and tender mango leaves that emerged from the tops of the pots.
And they hung decorations around their doorways.
(52) Throughout the wide, jeweled streets
they erected large pavilions over sidewalks.
In rows they set up betel-nut palms with bunches of fruit,
tasty sugarcane stalks, banana trees with ripe bunches of fruit.
They put up mirrors strung together, as though the nine planets
were suspended in that place.
And, more, they placed flags in rows so high that the seven horses
that pull the shining sun would stumble if they passed by.
(53) They sprinkled cool rose water and flowers,
scattered gold dust mixed with parched rice,
set up female statues holding lamps.
In pavilions they hung green garlands.
Everywhere they hung garlands
of precious stones, emeralds, and pearls,
so that the beautiful streets seemed like open-air markets.
(54) They decorated the foreheads of battle elephants with red vermilion,
and placed on them plates of gold, inlaid with firelike jewels.
Fast-running horses they adorned with jewels
on their necks, legs, and saddles.
To the luminous chariots on which they hung
flower garlands and yak-tail fans, they hitched horses.
With faultless golden plates they made auspicious oil lamps
adorned with the nine precious stones.
(55) Women cast off their old ornaments and put on new ones.
They made a mixture of rosewater and cosmetic powders,
spread it on their round breasts, which seemed then to disappear,
and dried out the applied mixture.
Then, they rubbed on fragrant sandalwood paste with aromatics,
and gazed into beautiful mirrors—
all in a way that made the men suffer [from lust].
(56) Women—like clinging vañci vines—
applied collyrium to their [glinting] spearlike eyes,

and fixed those eyes on the chests of their men.
As they applied to their feet a paste of red cotton dye,
they decorated themselves with anklets.
They enjoyed palmyra wine, suffered, staggering to one side,
babbling soft, childlike banters to please their men,
singing songs to Murukaṉ in the company of women.
(57) Dancing women with their singing-mate men
went about like loving celestial couples
praising that queen among women.
They sang sweet songs, accompanied by lutes,
overjoyed with the approaching wedding.
They spread the ends of their saris to receive what was given,
held the gifts high on their heads
as they danced, drank wine, and rejoiced.
(58) Royal women, brahmin women came to meet
[the Bride's mother] Kāñcaṉamālai,
inquiring about the happy event,
as they inspected the Lady's wedding attire.
They went away joyously, their bodies covered in hair ointments
and soft golden perfume mixed with fragrant camphor
all lavished upon them by the Lady's attendants.
(59) Waters from the Ganges, the Yamuna, the Sarasvatī, the Cauvery,
and from many other sacred sources
were filled into beautiful pots fashioned from gold,
wrapped in cloth, surrounded by budding flower garlands,
and placed atop rutting mountainous elephants
encircled by women waving yak-tail fans as auspicious music played.
(60) As though the wedding rituals would occur in their own homes
the townspeople shouted,
prepared food with all the six tastes
for the Vedic scholars to enjoy,
honored ascetics, welcomed them, saying,
"Your offerings are being cooked here!"
received Śiva's devotees,
performed worship by prescribed rules.
(61) This, then, was how they decorated the city.
The Bridegroom was without equal, and since the Bride was as well,
how could it be said that we have equals,
that any other excellent city could equal
the excellence of our fortified city?
And so now I describe how the relatives of the Bride
decorated the marriage pavilion.
(62) Tall chariots reaching high as the sky they arranged in rows.
It was as though all the sacred mountains
had approached the city to see their Lord's daughter,
or as though the Lady who appeared in the luminous moon dynasty
had arranged in rows chariots taken [as booty] that day
in Her victorious battle over Indra
whose vehicle is the dark clouds of the sky.
(63) On both sides [of the wedding pavilion] were steps of pure gold,
and elephants, seven cubits high, carved from marble.
There were rows of lionlike monsters with tusks made from

brilliant sapphire on the porches inlaid with gems.
There were latticed, emerald windows
interspersed on shining crystal walls
that refracted images of approaching visitors
as though they were dancing, painted figures.
(64) There were a thousand coral pillars on which were carved many forms,
and above them were capitals shaped in sapphire.
There were beautiful crossbeams made of gold,
and crossbeams of darkness-dispelling rubies on the veranda
with an upper story of bright fashioned stone from the cool,
nectar-bodied moon.
From all these things was the sacrificial pavilion made.
(65) In rows they set up plantain trees with long leaves
made from shining green emeralds, golden stems,
hanging bunches of ripe fruit fashioned in pure gold,
and coral clusters of hanging flowers.
There were betel-nut palms, their abundant trunks done in silver,
their sweet fruit in red coral clusters,
dense green bunches of leaves in shining emerald,
and petals of pearl.
(66) Sprouting in rows around the pavilion
there were plants of gall-nut, basil, champaka flower,
trumpet flower, and others as well.
Open-mouthed bees buzzed as they visited
delicately scented flowers dripping with sweet honey.
And the flowers in the gardens they planted
gave off drops of sweet honey to the gentle southern breezes
that wafted through the latticework windows.
(67) By relying on the ancient treatises
they established the sacrificial hall, the raised altar,
and the sacrificial fire pit, each with its proper boundaries.
They put in place, with properly crafted markings,
the eight luminous, auspicious signs, said to include:
a mirror; a bull; a bright lamp; an image of Lakṣmī;
a large, shining yak-tail fly whisk;
a conch shell with whorls to the right;
a swastika sign; and a full water pot.
(68) Fragrant saffron flowers and powders mixed with musk oil
were soaked in rosewater, made into a paste,
and then smeared in a wide area.
There were female statues holding up in both hands
lamps made of large jewels from the hoods of cobras:
lamps shining so brightly they shamed the sun.
They adorned the marriage pavilion on the underside of its ceiling
with a canopy inlaid with the nine kinds of gems
that shone like clusters of stars.
(69) In front of this excellent golden temple,
they placed a pavilion that reached up to the sky
and which seemed to spread throughout the eight directions.
Seeds were sown in beautiful golden pots.
Suitable for [Brahmā,] the lotus-born one, and other celestials,
a golden carpet was spread out, and seats placed on it.

For the party of the One who wears tumpai flowers,
and long, matted hair
seats were placed in a circle and in the middle . . .
(70) they erected columns with square tops, and bases of luminous coral
all fixed on pedestals that stood on the napes of necks
of shining lions made from diamonds provided
by the Wish-granting Tree.
They made beams of radiant crystal, cornices of coral,
three beautiful upper levels and, according to the texts,
a shining cupola of many gems. Underneath it . . .
(71) for Our Lord to reign with Our Lady they prepared
a beautiful, golden throne embedded with the nine gems
and supported by the six Vedic commentaries as legs.
The first letter became the seat suspended by the four Vedas
strung with pearls as moving ropes.
(72) They had from Indra's miraculous Wish-granting Tree
lovely clothing, jewels, and other things.
From the Wish-granting Cow which bounteously grants rare ambrosia,
they had many kinds of food:
those of the five classes and the six tastes.
And from the fabulous Wish-granting Gem they had
all sorts of things thought about, requested, wanted.
All this they collected so that even the city of Indra was shamed.
(73) Palm leaf invitations to the wedding of the Holy Daughter
of the king of kings of the South
sovereigns received, worshipped, and honored
by taking them in their hands
and touching them to their jewelled crowns.
On hearing the reading of the invitation,
they gave messengers who brought it precious clothing, ornaments.
Then drawn by a rising joy, moving faster than thought itself,
they rose and set out.
(74) There were kings from many countries:
Koṅku, Srī Laṅka, Pallava, Cēra; the bow-wielding Kosala, the
Punjab, Bengal, Ethiopia, China, Chaluva, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh,
Kāmpōca, Aṅka, Makata, Arya, Avanti, which follows the right path,
Kaṅka, Koṅkaṇam, Virāṭa, Maharashtra, Carnatica, Kuru,
(75) Kaliṅka, Java, Kūviḷa*, Orissa, Burma, Kandahar, Kuliṅga*,
Kēkaya, Vitēka, Puru*, Kolla, Kaliyāṇa land*, Telengana,
Gujarat, Maccar, Mleccha land, Ceñcai*,
and other kings, too: all came crowding together
from every direction, covering the land.
(76) All together they came, these kings from many countries;
there was hardly space for a single sesame seed.
With their armies they spread out like the green seas,
[almost enough] to break the back of Mother Earth.
Each, from his own land, as tribute, brought many kinds of wealth.
From all directions they approached,
crowding into that ancient city where the wedding drums
of the Daughter of the Pāṇḍya kings pounded.
(77) Gatekeepers brought news of the coming kings.
She said "Let them come," and the kings were directed to

where She sat atop Her beautiful lion throne.
With rejoicing eyes they beheld Her there,
this Lady who is like a growing vine
covered in fragrant, fresh flowers,
with leaves of virtue and fruits of grace,
and they worshipped Her,
the flowers on their crowns falling to the ground.
Receiving the Lady's grace, they took their appointed places.
(78) Mountain riches, forest riches, riches from agricultural lands
bounded by cool paddy fields,
riches given from ships of the sea: all these were abundant
as the city's splendor increased beyond description.
And now I describe the beauty of Him who came to wed,
of Him who surpasses the four Vedas.
(79) After the supreme Woman ruler returned [to Madurai],
the Beautiful Lord, wearing the king of snakes as His jewel,
left the battlefield and returned to His silver mountain.
Perceiving the intentions of [Śiva], that Lord of Pleasure,
that Lord who grants pleasure to all living things,
the gracious Nandin set his mind
on inviting [to the wedding]
[Indra], the Lord of Celestials, Viṣṇu,
Brahmā, and the heavenly hosts.
(80) He sent out Caṅkukaṉṉaṉ and other servant leaders.
When they reached the heavenly abode of the great deities,
of the red-eyed rudras, Viṣṇu, Brahmā, and others,
they announced the wedding celebration of our Lord.
Hearing the news, the gods all rushed [to Mount Kailāsa]
propelled by their growing devotion.
(81) [They all came:]
the Rudra of the End of the Age, emitting smoke a distance of
450 million miles, and fire twice that distance;
two times five rudras like him, around him;
Ten million rudras around each of those ten;
four kinds of fiery-eyed goblins;
the one hundred fearful rudras of the celestial world;
and their servant warriors whose power and strength
are feared even by deities including Viṣṇu and Brahmā . . .
(82) the Lords of the eight subtle worlds;
guardians of the 280 million hells;
[Śiva's attendant], Kūrmaṇḍa, with his army of servants;
the one hundred rudras given by Śiva, the Supreme Truth and Light;
the billion rudras which these latter supplied;
as well as the servant chiefs.
(83) The eight rudras including Pavaṉ, Pacupati,
and the rudra who wears poison-mouthed snakes;
Āṭakēcurrar, who shines with the brilliance of Mount Meru;
and Nīlalōkita, who appeared as a result of penance
on the forehead of Brahmā to chastise him,
curb his pride, and clarify the duties
that were misunderstood by [Brahmā], the one
residing in the lotus full of petals and ever-dripping honey . . .

(84) the eleven rudras with glowing red eyes in their foreheads;
the kāpālika rudras wearing long bones,
carrying victorious tridents and skulls,
the great Cāttaṉ riding a horse;
the chiefs of Śiva's servants wearing upper garments of green;
those clothed in nothing at all;
and the eight guardians of the directions
riding on the backs of dogs.

(85) The Dark [Viṣṇu], whose eyes are like the red lotus flower;
the Lord [Brahmā], who sits beautifully enthroned atop the red lotus;
Indra and the other guardians of the eight directions;
the eight Vasu deities,
the forty-nine storm deities, whose knowledge is faultless;
the two Asvin deities;
the twelve suns, which spread warmth and light from the sky;
and a single, white-light giving moon.

(86) The tiger-footed ṛṣi [Vyagrapadha], who obtained by severe penance
eyes in his hands and his feet and then achieved release;
the cobra-hooded Patañjali, who has the form of a snake;
the young sage [Upamaṇṇiyu], who put his red feet on Kṛṣṇa's head
and who drank from the ocean of milk;
the short-statured one [Agastya];
the four sages, including Janaka, who perceived truth,
as well as Vāmadeva, Suka, Vyasa, and Narada . . .

(87) the seven mothers; yogis with supernatural powers; beneficent
deities; celestial singers; and nature spirits;
sages and yogis who have completely mastered the Vedas;
many snakes with gems in the tops of their heads;
rākśasas, demons of great, unfailing strength;
demon chiefs with the might of their swords;
goblins and graveyard demons, who wander in groups;
wild female demons as well as celestial females.

(88) The years, the half-years, the seasons of the year,
the twelve months, the two monthly fortnights,
the five divisions of day, the periods, the moments,
day and night, the units of time in hours and minutes,
the pounding seas and rivers, the directions,
the great tall mountains that support the eight directions,
the clouds, the lightning, and the five exalted, great elements.

(89) The worlds of sounds and of objects
divided into letters, words, and phrases,
or into the things themselves, what we know of those things,
and our general perceptions of them,
the Vedas, the Āgamas, many kinds of religious treatises,
the commentaries on these treatises,
the four goals in life, beginning with dharma,
the four paths of salvation, beginning with right action,
the eight supernatural powers not wanted by devotees of Him
who wears in His hair the moon and the roaring [Ganges] waters.

(90) Among the thousands of vast, rising multitudes,
vast as a thousand seas,
there were rudras and deities like thousands of suns.

While thousands of drums pounded in unison,
as though a thousand worlds were exploding,
all this host traveled one hundred thousand billion miles
in only half a moment.
(91) The great, clear-minded sages,
the gods, and the rudras of Śiva,
on their chariots and other vehicles,
with their wives, who wore luminous corsets,
their nippled breasts smeared with sandalwood paste,
their hair adorned with beautiful, sweet flower garlands;
all these, going by way of the cool sky path, approached together
the beautiful mountain of Him on whose left [sits]
that Woman whose waist is thin as a thread.
(92) Descending from their vehicles, they prostrated themselves,
worshipped the Lord, and then rose.
With their tongues they praised the Lord's fame and holy name,
as goosebumps rose on their bodies.
Their love grew as they raised their clasped hands over their heads.
Like bees they gathered 'round that Holy Mountain
where the honey of bliss pours forth
like a great, grace-filled pleasure
to the eyes and the other four senses.
(93) To control the thronging crowds of celestials,
our Lord Nandin, who wears snakes in his matted hair,
wielded his staff as a weapon,
whacking them on their jewelled crowns.
Beautiful Mount Kailāsa disappeared in the spreading dust,
like the moon disappears when the day-making sun
blots it out on the new-moon day.
(94) As the celestials who came stood outside,
our generous Nandin went in.
Worshipping the holy feet of Our Father, he said,
"Lord, all celestials have come." "Bring them here," Śiva said.
In the proper order according to rank,
Nandin invited them in by directing them with his staff.
And they came, one after another, bowing down to worship
by crowning themselves with the red, lotuslike foot of the Lord.
(95) Among those who praised the Pure One,
coming before Him in worship, there were
some to whom He graciously gave
a word from His holy mouth;
some to whom He gave a gracious, budding smile;
some to whom He gave a glance;
and some toward whom He nodded His crown.
Having thereby given the gifts of grace,
this One whose throat once saved the worlds
rose, intending to enter the pavilion,
where He would assume His wedding form.
(96) Perceiving the intentions of the Lord of the Worlds,
[Kubera] the master of Aḷakā went to that pavilion.
In reward for the love rising in his heart
and for the faultless true penance he had done,

he touched the holy body [of Śiva],
a body which even the countless Vedas,
the two great ones, [Brahmā and Viṣṇu,] and the sages
will never be able to touch,
and he started decorating Him.
(97) He decorated Him with a beautiful garment, pleated in front,
falling as a beautiful loin cloth.
He tightened around the waist
a beautiful double cord along with a belt.
Adorning His hair with fresh blossoming flowers
around which bees buzzed, he placed in those matted coils
a garland of flowers from the Wish-granting Tree.
He smeared with his wide hand
on that sacred body covered with holy ash
musk oil mixed with sandalwood paste and rosewater.
(98) In place of His two beautiful seashell earrings
were fixed in His ears two golden, round rings
which shone as though suns had entered them.
[From these rings] two golden pendants hung,
dispelling the utter darkness over His shoulders.
A diamond necklace like a garland made from full moons
hung 'round His dark neck, dark as the minds
of those who believe the confused devas to be the Supreme Being.
(99) Across His right shoulder a sacred thread with three strands
shone on His chest like a waterfall
flowing down from the mountains.
Adorning His chest was a garland of pearls,
like nectar pouring forth from the white moon on His head.
Amid that expanse of glowing garlands of pearls,
making them even more beautiful,
was a garland of gleaming gems
splitting the face of darkness
like the young sun rising
over a ship-crossed ocean of milk.
(100) The straps he placed across those four shoulders
transcend all the directions.
Bracelets he attached to those radiant shoulders,
shoulders that seize the hearts of sages' lustful wives,
taking their breath away.
Casting off the skin of the restless, rutting elephant,
he put on a beautiful upper garment.
He took a sacrificial ring with sacred spells beyond words
and placed it on [the Lord's] beautiful finger.
(101) Above the encircling loin cloth he tied a gold cloth tightly.
A bright cloth with a luminous border of rubies
he hung, front and back, between the legs,
like the hanging body of a five-headed snake.
He put a flower garland on His shoulders,
and on those feet so dear to devotees,
yet far beyond scholarly words,
he placed belled chains and warriors' anklets.
All this finished, [Kubera], the king of the two treasures,

had achieved the goal of his difficult austerities.
(102) The act of adorning that sacred Lord
whose benign glance alone grants good fortune
to red-eyed Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Indra, and even all other gods,
was like perfecting perfection.
Placing His feet on the back of [His servant] Short Potbelly,
He climbed onto the great approaching bull,
starting out as celestials poured forth a shower of flowers.
(103) In the midst of the sounds of celestials' pounding
their five large kettle drums,
demons, nature spirits, and goblins all came,
causing auspicious music to play.
Keeping time as they beat small cymbals,
the mighty celestial musicians, great artists all,
incited heavenly damsels,
their dark hair bearing bouquets of flowers,
to move in slow rhythm, like vines in full blossom swaying.
(104) [Bhānukōpa], the one with two thousand strong shoulders
and a thousand heads,
put a thousand conch shells to his thousand mouths,
held them with his two thousand large hands,
and blew them all.
Throughout a thousand dark caves in the mountains,
where growing waterfalls roar,
it was like a thousand open-mouthed lions roaring.
(105) Worshipping incessantly the Lord who protects us,
who lies beyond feelings of egoism and strong attachment to
illusions of pleasure, Vāṇaṉ achieved release.
Accompanying the praise from his mouth, his thousand hands
pounded drums whose rhythmic sounds of "tvam"
drowned out the roar of the ocean.
(106) Sages praised Him, their red hands joyously clasped and raised high,
speaking words of blessing, their hearts melting,
their love blossoming.
Śiva's servant leaders, beyond all pain,
followed with a single intention, clasping both their hands together.
Some had tears falling from their eyes like rain;
some danced on their feet; some sang with their tongues;
all were praising, praising.
(107) From one side Indra came holding a jewelled spittoon;
Īśāna, coming from another,
held a golden salver with betel nut and aromatics.
The gods of storm, waving fans, created the sound of the winds.
The growing fire [of Agni] came, offering incense.
And [Varuṇa], the water god, came, holding in his lotuslike hand
a golden tray of flowers.
(108) Nirṛti, [Regent of the Southwest], approached, holding a mirror.
[Kubera], King of Alakā, with this [[special occasion]] in mind,
frequently scattered about priceless treasures.
Yama came, too, acting as the good bodyguard.
Śeṣa, [the serpent] with a thousand hoods that shone like suns,
held up many jewelled lamps.

The Vedic corpus came, too, placed the Lord's feet on its head,
  and then followed behind.
(109) The Ganges, the Cauvery, and the other nine river goddesses
  waved yak-tail fans that looked like long waves rising high
    to increase the coolness.
The devoted servant Short Potbelly,
  with his conch-shell earrings, red hair like burning fire,
    pit-hole eyes, black body, and long shining teeth,
    like slits of the white crescent moons,
      came carrying an umbrella round as the cool, full moon.
(110) The tall, long flag that bears [Indra's] sign of lightning
  and thunder in the sky;
[Brahmā's] white swan flag;
[Viṣṇu's] flag with the mighty Garuḍa [man-bird],
  that makes strong, poisonous snakes tremble and hiss
    like a spreading, violent storm on the day the world ends:
all these, in a group of flags, billowed around that king of flags,
  the flag of [Śiva's] bull, as they all flapped and danced.
(111) On either side of that Lord with an eye in His forehead
  the two gods [Viṣṇu and Brahmā] appeared, like branches
    coming from the same tree.
A large potbellied bhuta held aloft a beautiful trident,
  as the eighteen divine weapons worshipped it.
He walked like a mountain moving alongside
  the three great, rising luminaries.
(112) Puṣpadanta came, singing northern hymns
  as though singing the essence of the four Vedas.
Sundaramurti, who once brought the poison that rose like fire
  to destroy the gods and who appeared in a mirror
    as a reflection of the Lord with neither beginning nor end,
      came bearing holy ash and garlands.
(113) Brahmā was on the right with his swan vehicle.
Viṣṇu was on the left,
  with his vehicle which destroys the strength of snakes.
Both worshipped, their lotuslike hands folded.
And then, that One who wears
  the beautiful, golden, sweet laburnum flowers,
    atop His silver mountain of a bull
      reached the vicinity of that great city of Madurai
        where chariots stood in rows.
(114) He came:
  this God of gods;
  this One who has the red-eyed Viṣṇu as a vehicle;
  this first God among the three great gods;
  this three-eyed Lord;
  this ancient One who pervades all things,
    even things unseen by Viṣṇu and the flower-dwelling Brahmā.
This Creator of all things:
  His coming the reports of the golden trumpets announced.
(115) At the gate of the queen's palace there were
  great, worthy ministers; kings from all the other lands;
    army chieftains; and others: gathered, watching,

bowing down to welcome Him who is sweetness to the eyes,
as He entered into the city that was more beautiful
than the city of [Indra], king of heaven.
(116) Having entered the great outer gates
of that ancient city with fortifications that rise to the sky,
He took a turn around the interior palace streets,
where the fragrance of algum wood spread,
and where young girls, like golden vines,
their breasts sprouting,
with abundant, golden cloth-covered waists,
gathered in groups alongside the streets.
(117) There were women from the Tamil land
and from seventeen other countries.
They were like nectar from the land of the Wish-granting Tree:
or like a flower garden with the mingled fragrances of
jasmine, lotus, water lily, blue lotus, coomb teak,
silk cotton, Malabar lily, and blossoming Asoka trees.
(118) [The womens' loosening] anklets and bangles made noises
as though they were crying "Are you abandoning us?"
Seeming to tether them by their ankles,
their anklets rang, warning,
"With your broken hearts,
all shame and discretion are leaving you.
This we tell you, yes, we do."
(119) Like a fragrant, flowering forest of lotus blossoms,
from His head to His feet, was this great, Compassionate One
while they gazed at Him with their dark, water-lily eyes,
and praised Him,
raising their bangle-clad, clasped hands aloft
as though they were crowning their own heads
with their lotus-flower hands.
(120) "What penance has our Maiden done
to deserve such an admirable Man?" some asked.
"What penance has this fine Man done
to deserve our Maiden?" said others.
"What difficult penance has this beautiful,
great town of Madurai done?"
"What penance have we done to see this marriage?" they asked.
(121) Some said that the Southern King, to have such a daughter
had earlier done great penance; but then failed to do penance
in order to see his daughter's marriage.
Some said that this Handsome Young Man is perfectly matched
to the beauty of the Virgin.
Others claimed there could be no king for Madurai except Him.
(122) Some said it was all [due to] the mighty Sumati's
prodigious knowledge of great, sacred books,
a wisdom which designated this Young Man
appropriate to marry this Maiden:
all that, they said, was the fruit of the Maiden's penance.
Others wondered not only at the penance Her mother must have
done to give birth to this Maiden,
but also at how much penance she must have done

to win this Young Man as a son-in-law.
(123) Some women loosened their clothing, then tightened it again.
Others:
squeezed their breasts together
causing sandalwood paste there to fall away;
bowed their heads, overtaken by shyness;
loosened their braided hair, combed it and tied it up again;
languished as though they were feeling the pricking arrows
of the god of love sticking in their bodies,
bodies tender as mango leaves.
(124) Some women were amazed, and said so,
that the beautiful, colored, tender flowers [they wore]
had lost their natural cool softness,
were pricking them like arrows.
Blue nelumbo and smiling mullai blossoms
they unfastened from their braided hair.
(125) Certain lustrous women, their breasts large and erect,
pierced by the potent arrows of the bow-wielding god of love,
reeled in confusion.
Thinking their own long, painted eyes, teeth, and faces
were his arrows, they dropped their heads down,
not daring to look at each others' faces.
(126) Not realizing why their bodies were turning a golden-yellow color,
they said, "How can the Lord who is seated on the incomparable
bull, be in our hearts as well?"
[[Showing the yellow color of their bodies,]] they said,
"What is this illusion? Isn't this [the color of] the laburnum
flower in the long, tangled hair of the Lord?"
(127) Some asked, "How is it that this thing called a moon
burns us like red-hot fire, and yet lies there
on the Lord's [cool] head?"
Some wondered whether for Him it was hot at all,
while others said He must have put the Ganges River in His
hair to cool it.
"Look," they said, [amazed], "look at it all . . . ."
(128) Women with eyes sharp as spears accustomed to killing
saw the procession of the Lord.
Their garments, along with their modesty, all slipped away.
Their color changed; they lost their minds.
Like wax dropped on an oven, their [senses] melted as tears fell.
It was as though they had became true lovers of the Lord
who wears the moon and the Ganges River [in His hair].
(129) Like those without gratitude when friends are in distress,
round bracelets and bangles abandoned the arms of women;
jewelled belts fell away from their waists.
Like those who are grateful and choose not to leave,
golden anklets remained fastened to their ankles.
The women stood there like vines whose flowers had dropped away.
(130) One jewel-bedecked woman,
her spearhead-shaped eyes glinting like lightning, said:
"Didn't this Lord's glance and smile
burn the Three Forts and the god of love?

His glance will not be in vain: I am done for, it is burning my body."
(131) One woman, her eyes like those of a deer, reached out to [embrace]
the vision before her of the handsome form of the Lord.
As she did so her two breasts became one,
but, unable to touch Him, her breasts separated again.
She grew thin, as thin as her waist.
(132) A beautiful woman, her large breasts tightly bound, cried out:
"Women, beware! That darkness on the neck of Him
who wears laburnum flowers in His matted hair
comes not from swallowing the poison, black as night,
on that day He saved the gods.
That darkness shows He has a heart of cold, black iron."
(133) One woman lamented, "My heart, like a messenger, has gone out
to Him whose hair shines like gold.
And now, [somehow], it has failed to return to me."
Another said, "I'm lost. My heart, too, is gone."
Hearing this, the [first] woman's
spearlike eyes burned bright as lightning [in jealous rage].
In the same way another woman began quarreling with her.
(134) A young woman with small, potlike breasts said,
"As You once burned the god of love, Lord, now You've burned me
since You've cast Your gracious gaze on me.
As You once restored that god to life after burning him,
so now grant me my life as well.
If You will not, then carry the just reputation
of one guilty of this woman's death."
(135) One woman, like a beautiful, golden vine, realizing that the Lord
who has Viṣṇu as His swift-moving vehicle,
had passed without casting a glance on her,
found an expert painter, approached him and said,
"If you can paint a picture of Him
I'll give you anything you want."
When he replied, "Who could possibly paint Him?"
she sighed and then fainted.
(136) A woman of incomparable beauty failed to see
Brahmā coming on His right, Viṣṇu [coming] on His left,
the crowds of celestials, even the crowds of people.
Like the enlightened sages, all she saw was the holy form of Him
who holds in His red hand the deer and the axe.
(137) Running ahead to catch sight of the Lord
Who travels on that bull fast as the wind,
one woman with pale, golden breasts
seemed to be dragged by a rope of desire.
Her golden garments, like flowers dropping from a vine
fell around her ankles as she stumbled,
like a shackled woman walking.
(138) Wearing the crescent moon, He arrived on His fierce, red-eyed bull.
All the women, joyous, feasted on the sight of Him
as though their eyes were lips
drinking from an ocean of joyous nectar.
Unaware that their new clothes were falling to the ground,
that their bangles and jewelry were slipping away,

or that their sense of discretion was leaving them,
they were submerged in a flood of lust.
(139) Some stood above in rows on beautiful, cool balconies,
their hands folded in worship, their eyes fixed on Him,
their wills abandoned to Him, their acts and words extinguished.
They stood transfixed, no different in form
from the terra cotta dolls that decorated the place.
(140) Some women stared, knowing nothing
of that holy form of the Lord
whose long hair is like lightning,
who burned the body of the god of love and the bodies of
the loveless inhabitants of the Triple Fort;
and as they stared, their golden ornaments and bodies were scorched.
What, then, would happen to their lives if they embraced Him?
(141) Bangles, anklets, and jewelled belts fell like flowers
from women who were like blossoming vines.
Lime powder and flowers dropped by celestials,
jewels from the crowns of celestials
scattered by blows from Nandin's bamboo cane,
and garlands, too:
all these things fell, collecting in piles on the streets.
(142) Brahmins sprinkled from a golden pot
water mixed with bo tree leaves and kuśa grass.
Their wives held burning wicks on plates
with edges lined in rows of shining jewels
that looked liked Indra's [rain]bow
when they waved the plates in circular motions
according to tradition.
(143) Women with figures like stalks of the flowering lotus
moved forward, holding high for display
the eight auspicious objects in the forms of:
a flag, a drum, a mirror, a golden pot, a bell,
a [burning] lamp like a fragrant flower blooming in ghee,
an elephant goad, and a yak-tail fan:
all this as He passed beside the palace.
(144) The Lord who burned the Triple Fort [of the demons],
and who grants undivided awareness
to lamp-bearing devotees whose love is pure,
bestowed grace on those celestial damsels
with their large, attractive, potlike breasts
and who, as music played, circled Him three times,
holding camphor lamps.
(145) As they drew near to the temple, masters of the four Vedas,
who control their five senses, sang auspicious songs.
Holding the long, large, red trunk of Nandin,
He descended from the red-eyed bull.
While Viṣṇu and Brahmā walked on either side,
He held their long, flowerlike hands.
(146) Though the obscure Vedas are unable to discern
the soft, holy feet of the Lord,
He places His golden flowerlike feet,
which bestow great joy, on the heads of those

with mature devotion to Him, who are free in their hearts
from [the fetters of] past actions,
and who desperately desire to see Him,
in the gracious form of His feet on their heads.
(147) Rolling out a carpet of welcome,
one thin as the sloughed-off skin of a cobra,
they spread [on it] a flood of flower leaves and petals
that dampened those holy feet wearing victory anklets.
A rain of divine mantāra flowers moistened His holy head
when the Lord who graciously came to make the Pāṇḍyas prosper
arrived at [the marriage pavilion].
(148) Kāñcaṉamālai came accompanied by auspicious married women
who carried in golden pots water taken from the Ganges.
As the women poured water, she washed the holy lotus feet
of the Lord of Light, who wears the moon as a garland.
Then she drank the wash-water and sprinkled it on her head.
(149) To dry those flowering lotuslike holy feet
she wiped them with white silk.
Bathing His feet in cool, sweet rosewater,
and applying a paste of musk oil mixed with sandalwood,
she adorned them with fresh, golden,
pollen-covered mantāra petals.
Then, stepping back in reverence, her hands folded above her head,
she began to speak:
(150) she said to Him, "Marry this divine virgin to whom I, a devotee,
through my difficult penance, have given birth."
"Rule this virgin land and the wealth of this beautiful city,"
she requested.
As if in agreement, this Son-in-law smiled slightly
and as musical instruments sounded
He entered the marriage pavilion.
(151) The Lord of the Dance took his seat on the jewelled throne
as the meaningful four Vedas chanted.
To Viṣṇu, Brahmā, the remaining rudras,
and the other celestials standing about
He indicated with His holy glance
that they all could be seated.
(152) Though all the celestials from heaven and those from all other worlds
crowded together [to see the wedding],
the earth goddess did not tilt this day as she did before.
Was it because He sent to the north the [sage Agastya],
the one who swallowed the seven seas?
Was it because of the power of the Lord of deities?
Why, for certain, we do not know.
(153) Sitting on the throne embedded with large jewels,
waiting for the proper moment to perform the marriage,
He cast his gracious gaze on the lovely dancing
of celestial damsels,
damsels like vines with divine, golden flowers.
Now I describe the way the Queen was adorned for the marriage.
(154) This supreme Queen, who is none other than Śiva
in the form of eternal light,

bathes us in floods of joy and breaks our bondage.
It is She whom women like flowering vines,
women with moonlike faces, invited to sit on the golden throne
as they bathed Her in perfumed water
and rubbed Her with kuṅkumam paste and musk oil.
(155) As drums and conch shells sounded, She bathed.
Putting on fine clothing appropriate for a ruler,
She generously gave fitting gifts to brahmins
—more even than they could want—
with Her own soft, fragrant hand.
Then She who is like the nectar that appeared in the sea
began to dress for the marriage.
(156) [Lakṣmī], the goddess of the red flower,
and [Sarasvatī], the goddess of the white lotus flower,
as though demonstrating the results of penance done earlier,
with their flowerlike hands applied a red dye mixture
to the feet of the Lady, feet so tender
they fear to step on even
the beautiful [delicate] aṉicca flower.
Then they applied to Her hair a fragrant ointment.
(157) On Her swelling breasts they applied sandalwood paste
mixed with cool rosewater.
Then they placed [on Her feet]
beautiful, bright, red chiming foot ornaments
and dangling ankle rings that sounded like noises made by swans
whose red coral mouths open as they sit on lotus flowers.
(158) On Her waist were five different kinds of ornaments:
a thirty-two string waistband,
a jewelled girdle of twenty-one strands,
a belt of fourteen strings of beads and gems,
a beautiful strap made of eight strands,
and two belts of bells, each with seven strands,
that made noises like bees buzzing inside flowers.
(159) On Her slender fingers, which looked like beautiful kāntaḷ flowers
on which golden jewellike bees had alighted,
there were dazzling gold and blue sapphire rings.
Bracelets embedded with diamonds matched Her red hands,
and on Her wide shoulders were armlets—
all so brilliant that the sun in the sky
seemed to bow down in reverence.
(160) A fragrant paste was smeared on Her erect breasts.
Garlands of emeralds, lovely gold, and coral
shone in rows like Indra's [rain]bow,
and a garland of pearls resembled
both the mountain waterfall and its beautiful foam.
(161) The large pearls She wore were like stars in the sky
surrounded by many jewels, which were the planets.
In one pendant She wore, a large gem in the center
was like the gleaming sun that makes darkness flee in fear.
A pendant moving between Her breasts
was like the constellation Ursa Major moving in an arc
around Mt. Meru.

(162) She walked [majestically] like a royal elephant,
appearing as the very light of that ancient royal family.
She was adorned with earrings that outshone the sun,
. that were round as the splendid moon,
and the design on them of strong sharks
that recall the carp [of the Pāṇḍya dynasty]
hung [near Her ears] as though whispering private advice.
(163) The golden head ornament covered with jewels
and the pendant on Her forehead were like the rainbow
between the clouds [that were Her hair]
and the full moon [that was Her forehead].
Ladies adorned Her perfumed hair with a chain of garlands
that seemed to foretell how, one day, Her son [Ugra Pāṇḍya]
would be able to enchain the clouds.[1]
(164) With jewels given by the Wish-granting Tree
they decorated Her body
to cause Śiva, the three-eyed Lord,
to gaze on Our Lady's beauty,
to create everlasting joy and wonder in His mind
as they waited for the auspicious marriage hour.
Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī worshipped and watched.
(165) They sang to our beautiful Queen auspicious wedding songs.
[Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī], walking on either side,
extended their tender mango-leaf-like hands
which the Queen, with flowers in Her hair,
held with Her own red, tender, leaflike hands,
which tend to the growth of the thirty-two dharmas,
while the Vedas sounded Her praises.
(166) Marriage drums sounded; conch shells were blown;
celestials showered down torrents of flowers;
yak-tail fans were waved.
Ladies wearing jewelry sang well-wishing songs of praise
to our Queen.
(167) The wife of Indra carried a beautiful golden salver
with betel nut, betel leaves, and other things.
[The courtesan] Tilōttamai carried a mirror in her hands.
Vintai, [goddess of bravery], carried a golden scepter
she used to conduct crowds that accompanied our Queen.
(168) Arampai, wearing a garland of flowers, held a spittoon.
Urvaśī waved a large fan decorated with pure gems.
Meṉakai held a flower plate embedded with gems of many colors.
(169) Many women, like vines, carried dew-covered flowers
dripping with cool rosewater.
Others carried gold-colored, fragrant powders to throw.
Some women, wearing bangles, held burning lamps and pots
that gave off sweet-smelling incense.
(170) Our Lady wore jewelled anklets as she walked gently on the ground
strewn with soft flowers mixed with sandalwood paste
and cool perfumed water,
while women with flowers in their hair sang their welcoming songs.
(171) Our Queen Mīnākṣī, with Her hands like flowers,
held in one hand the flowerlike hand of Lakṣmī,

who lives in the red lotus.
With Her other she held the flowerlike hand of Sarasvatī.
As she walked, Her anklets chimed as though to say,
"Anyone who desires both knowledge and wealth
in this life should worship our Lady now."
(172) Our Goddess walked slowly as She reached the place
where Śiva, whose love for Her is great, was seated.
Adjusting Her hair, deferentially, carefully, She sat by His side
as Her chained waistband musically jingled.
(173) On the marriage platform made of gold,
embedded with gems that shone brightly, dispelling the darkness,
Mīnākṣī sat with the beautiful Śiva.
It was as though a vine with blooming flowers
sat entwined around the Wish-granting Tree
on the top of Mount Meru, where the sun circles day and night.
(174) If they took separate forms: the note and enchanting music,
water and its coolness, milk and its sweet taste,
the flower and its fragrance, the jewel and its lustre;
if they took separate forms, and were seated like a man and a woman,
then would they be like Śiva and the Mother
who gave birth to the worlds.
(175) The gods in the heavens, those from the eight directions,
those who dwell in the underworlds, people on earth,
and others, too—all these were gathered together
in the marriage pavilion
as though music had joined with its notes
and the noble sounds coming forth had achieved release,
becoming one with the holy feet of Śiva.
(176) Then, the god [Viṣṇu], who holds in his beautiful hand the discus,
washed with water from a golden pot the holy red feet
of the dancing Lord [Śiva], who once appeared
as a great, red, shining pillar of fire.
Anointing [Śiva] with sandalwood paste and pure, fragrant flowers,
worshipping [Him] with lighted camphor,
and performing the honorific lighted-lamp ceremony with devotion,
[Viṣṇu] stood in the presence of Śiva's boundless grace.
(177) The holy water that dripped from the feet of the Lord,
known in the Vedas to be the first brahmin among deities,
was received by the deity [Brahmā]
Who resides in the lotus flower,
by Viṣṇu, all the sages, by Indra and other deities,
by Nandin and the servants with him, as well as other devotees.
They took it, sprinkled it on their bodies, drank it,
purifying themselves within and without.
(178) Standing on one side, Viṣṇu took the hand of the goddess,
a hand which is like the blooming [white] kāntaḷ flower—
and placed it into the holy, red, lotus-flower-like
hand of the Great One, [Śiva].
As mantras were chanted, Viṣṇu poured water [onto their hands]
from a pot, while celestials poured down showers of flowers
as they watched in reverence.
(179) Celestial courtesans danced;

heavenly musicians sang music sweet as nectar;
sages worshipped the Couple by shouting "Hara, Hara!"
Deities were overwhelmed, covered with goosebumps;
servants raised folded hands over their heads and worshipped Him.
All were drowning in a sea of marriage bliss.
(180) Gods, sages, and all others were sinking in a flood of joy:
speaking words of blessing with their pure tongues,
sprinkling pearl-white rice soaked in kuṇkumam water
at the feet of that One versed in the Vedas,
that One who treated as flowers
even the stones thrown by Puttaṉār.[2]
(181) "The Mother and the Father, though inseparable
as the fragrance from the flower,
by means of Their own gracious sacred game
seemed to us all for some time to be separate, apart
and then graciously married,
redeeming all three of the worlds,"
they said joyously among themselves.
(182) Sweet milk given by the beautiful Wish-granting Cow,
fruit provided by the Wish-granting Tree, ghee, sugar:
all these things were mixed together in a pleasing taste,
then placed in a round, golden vessel with legs and offered
to the One who wears the laburnum garland dripping with honey.
"Take this," they prayed of Him.
(183) The One who has eight forms
touched the golden vessel, appearing to consume its contents,
and to be happy with it.
He smiled brightly with His red mouth
which is like the fragrant, blossoming ampal flower.
Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, and chaste wives of other sages
began singing auspicious songs.
(184) The Lord [Brahmā] of the glorious, sweet-smelling lotus flower
sat [beside the fire] with all his sons.
The central tongue [of the fire] twisted, rising to taste
the clarified butter poured [into it] from a mango-leaf ladle,
and the divine red fire grew, turning as it swallowed
[the offering], sizzling in loud satisfaction.
(185) As the four Vedas chanted,
conch shells and musical instruments played.
[Brahmā], the well-versed, four-faced One,
had flawlessly completed the sacrificial rituals
according to the basic texts.
That great Yogi who graciously gives release
to those without attachments
tied the marriage necklace on the neck of Her
who gave birth to the entire universe,
and then He took Her red hand.
(186) He it is who has tongues of fire,
who makes the fire grow with flame,
who receives the offering poured into fire:
He is all these things.
To plunge the world into the enjoyment of coupling,

He became both man and woman,
and graciously performed the act of marrying.
Who can comprehend the acts of a Lord who does all this for us?
(187) Then that great Lord with the moon in His hair,
together with His Wife, received puffed rice in His hands
and sprinkled it into the red flames.
To sages versed in the Vedas,
who know His holy form constitutes all things,
They gave appropriate gifts, satisfying them fully
and then, according to tradition,
[They] walked [together] around the fire.
(188) Then the Lord, taking in His hand
Mīnākṣī's lotus-flower foot, with its chiming anklets,
placed it upon an auspiciously decorated grinding stone
adorned with pure gold
as He chanted mantras.
"Where is the wife of the meritorious Vasiṣṭha?" He asked.
With her red hands folded in praise she came forward
as He bestowed upon her His gracious gaze.
(189) In this way, without departing from the rules,
all the sacrificial rituals were completed.
Then, as an example to the people
of this world surrounded by roaring seas,
while the four Vedas chanted,
and women with bright teeth like pearls sang greetings,
the Lord who burned the god of love,
with the Lady whose forehead is like the moon,
entered the nuptial chamber.
(190) People, their eyes unblinking as they gazed
at the Lord's auspicious form,
were like pure heavenly beings.
Were they then worthy of worship?
Those who have achieved the prolonged gracious gaze of our Father:
are they not worthy to receive [gifts of] cool flowers,
praise, worship, and service, even from deities?
(191) Humans and deities: together they stood enthralled,
side by side, no differences among them,
having viewed the wedding that relieves all suffering.
When the gracious gaze of the Lord with a third eye
who dances in cremation grounds,
relieves the sufferings of birth in this world,
are not those of this world and those of the world above
the same?
(192) The Lord who gives never-diminishing wealth
to dark, tall Viṣṇu, to the husband of Sarasvatī,
to the other deities, and to the crowds of Śiva's servants,
left the seat of the nuptial chamber,
arrived at the marriage pavilion,
sat on the throne embedded with clusters of jewels,
and gave [still more] gifts appropriate to the festive occasion.
(193) To [Brahmā], who lives in the open, blooming lotus,
to Viṣṇu and to other deities He graciously gave leave to depart:

"Travel now the paths to your respective, prosperous homelands."
Then, for the kings [there] the Lord graciously showed
how to rule, just as a dance master dances to teach dancing.
(194) The flag with the roaring bull became the flag with a beautiful fish;
snake ornaments became ornaments of gold;
blooming laburnum flowers became margosa blossoms;
tiger skin clothing became golden attire;
the crescent moon in His hair became a diamond-studded crown
when the Lord Somasundara settled in that great city
celebrated in the Vedas called Madurai
and took His seat on the throne as a Pāṇḍya.
(195) To match the form taken by the beautiful Lord,
[whose hair is] adorned by the moon that moves through the sky,
the rudras, who held blood-shedding tridents,
with the strong Saṅku and other servants too,
changed their forms and stood by as servants to the king.
(196) To make clear to all the kings that rule the world
what the Vedas say about worshipping Śiva,
Śiva Himself took the form of a Pāṇḍya king
and arranged for construction in that city
of a beautiful palace called Center City.
(197) According to the scriptures He built [there] a temple,
established a gracious Śiva liṅga and named it
The God Who Grants Benefits in This Life.
That Lord Śiva, who was first found in the cadampa forest,
then did worship according to the rules,
worshipping three times a day
while He ruled the entire world.
(198) Brahmā of the flower, Viṣṇu, other deities, sages, and many more
worshipped Him there to achieve benefits.
Who is able to measure the greatness of such a liṅga
faultlessly worshipped even by the Lord with three eyes,
the greatest Lord among the three gods?
(199) As a king is to men;
as a lion is to [[elephants of]] unfriendly kings;
as the god of love with his five sweet arrows is to women;
as Viṣṇu, adorned with blooming tulasi garlands
is to the earth goddess;
as the Incomparable One is to those
who distinguish between the permanent and impermanent,
who have renounced all desire in this life and the next,
who have learned the inner truth,
so He stood: Truth, Knowledge, and Happiness without limit.

NOTES TO TRANSLATION

1. Reference here is made to a later story in the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* (I.14.41) in which Ugra manages to capture clouds in a chain.

2. The commentator notes that reference here is being made to a story in the *Periyapurāṇam* involving a devotee named Puttaṉār, also known as Cākkiya Nāyaṉār, who performed the Buddhist practice of throwing stones at Śiva lingams. Originally it was an act of defiance by Buddhists, but this devotee did it in worship. His name is derived from that of the Buddha, Śākyamuni.

APPENDIX B.

Selected Sanskrit Names and Terms, and Their Tamil Equivalents

I have used Sanskrit equivalents of Tamil terms when such a substitution would add clarity or make the material easier to read for those acquainted with the better-known Sanskrit terminology.

Sanskrit Term	Tamil Equivalent	Sanskrit Term	Tamil Equivalent
Abhiṣeka	Apiṭēka	Pāṇḍya	Pāṇṭiya
Agni	Akkiṉi	Patañjali	Patañcali
Anantaguṇa	Aṉantakuṇa	Rājarāja	Irācarāca
Cera	Cēra	Rājendra	Irācēntira
Bṛhaspati	Viyāḻaṉ	Satyloka	Cattiyalōkam
Citrā	Cittirai	Skanda	Murukaṉ
Cola	Cōḻa	Somaśekhara	Cōmacēkara
Dadhīca	Taticī	Somasundara	Cōmacuntarar
Dharmin	Tarumi	Subrahmaṇya	Cuppiramaṇiyam
Durgā	Koṟṟavai	Sundareśvara	Cuntarēcuvarar
Gaṇeśa	Piḷḷaiyar	Suratā	Cupaviratai
Indra	Intiraṉ	Śūrasēna	Cūracēṉaṉ
Īśāna	Icāṉaṉ	Turvasa	Turuvācamuṉi
Kāntārachedaka	Kāṭuveṭṭiya	Tvaṣṭṛ	Tuvaṭṭaṉ
kanyādāna	kaṉṉikātāṉam	Ugra	Ukkira
Kubera	Kupēraṉ	Vaṃshashekhara	Vaṅkiyacēkara
Kubja	Kūṉ	Vaṃśaśūḍāmaṇi	Vaṅkiyacūṭāmaṇi
Kulabandhana	Kulacciṟaiyār	Vaniteśvari	Maṅkaiyarkkaracī
Kulabhūṣaṇa	Kulapūṭaṇa	Varuṇa	Varuṇaṉ
Kulashekhara	Kulacēkara	Vāyu	Vāyu
Kulottuṅga	Kulōttuṅka	Vikrama	Vikkiramaṉ
Kuleśa	Kulēca	Virūpākṣa	Virūpākkaṉ
Malayadhvaja	Malayattuvaca	Virūpa	Viruttirācuraṉ
Mīnākṣī	Mīṉāṭci	Viśvarūpa	Viccurvavuruvaṉ
Nandin	Nantin	Yama	Iyamaṉ
Nirṛti	Niruti		

APPENDIX C.

Chapter Titles from
The Story of Śiva's Sacred Games

Three numbers appear before each chapter. The first indicates in which of the three volumes each particular chapter appears. The second is the number of the actual chapter. The third is the total number of quatrains in that chapter. Parenthetic numbers indicate specific page references in this book where the chapter is mentioned.

I. The Madurai Volume

I.1.97 The Chapter in Which Indra's Sin Is Effaced (32)
I.2.29 The Chapter in Which the Curse on the White Elephant Is Effaced (33)
I.3.47 The Chapter in Which the Holy City Is Founded (33)
I.4.35 The Chapter of the Sacred Incarnation of the Lady Taṭātakai (45, 153)
I.5.199 The Chapter of the Sacred Marriage (46–52, 153)
I.6.28 The Chapter of the Holy Dance in the Silver Courtyard (116)
I.7.22 The Chapter in Which Short Potbelly Is Fed
I.8.27 The Chapter in Which the Trench [Filled with] Food and the Vaigai River Are Summoned (34)
I.9.15 The Chapter in Which the Seven Seas Are Summoned
I.10.31 The Chapter in Which [King] Malayadhvaja Is Summoned [from Heaven]
I.11.45 The Chapter of the Sacred Incarnation of Ugra Pāṇḍya
I.12.66 The Chapter in Which Ugra Pāṇḍya Is Given a Spear, a Discus, and a Ball (137)
I.13.20 The Chapter in Which a Spear Is Thrown to Dry Up the Sea (113)
I.14.59 The Chapter in Which a Discus Is Thrown at Indra's Crown (205n)
I.15.41 The Chapter in Which Mount Meru Is Hit with a Ball
I.16.42 The Chapter in Which the Meaning of the Vedas Is Graciously Explained
I.17.93 The Chapter in Which Rubies Are Sold
I.18.19 The Chapter in Which the Ocean Released by Varuṇa Is Destroyed (205)

II. The Junction Volume

II.19.26 The Chapter in Which [the City] Becomes the Junction of the Four Towers (37)
II.20.24 The Chapter of the All-Powerful Siddha
II.21.29 The Chapter in Which Sugarcane Is Fed to a Stone Elephant
II.22.42 The Chapter in Which the Elephant Is Shot with an Arrow (35, 114)
II.23.33 The Chapter in Which [the Forms of] an Old Man, a Handsome Young Man, and a Child Are Assumed (117–19)
II.24.29 The Chapter in Which [Śiva] Changes the Foot on Which He Dances
II.25.44 The Chapter in Which [the King] Fears Committing Injustice
II.26.41 The Chapter in Which a Heinous Crime Is Effaced (55)

II.27.28 The Chapter in Which a Body Is Cut to Pieces (55)
II.28.23 The Chapter in Which the Snake Is Shot with an Arrow (35, 36, 114)
II.29.38 The Chapter in Which the Love-Struck Cow Is Tormented (114)
II.30.41 The Chapter in Which an Army Parade Is Reviewed
II.31.19 The Chapter in Which an Inexhaustible Bag of Gold Is Graciously Given
II.32.36 The Chapter in Which Bangles Are Sold
II.33.29 The Chapter in Which the Eight Great Miraculous Siddha Powers Are Taught
II.34.30 The Chapter in Which the Signet of the Bull Is Affixed (57)
II.35.37 The Chapter in Which a Water Pavilion Is Erected (57–58, 138–39)
II.36.30 The Chapter in Which Alchemy Is Performed (54)
II.37.22 The Chapter in Which a Cōḻa [King] Drowns in a Pond
II.38.18 The Chapter in Which an Inexhaustible Granary Is Graciously Given
II.39.37 The Chapter in Which [Śiva] Appears as a Maternal Uncle Who Presents Testimony in a Trial
II.40.68 The Chapter in Which Śiva's Heaven Is Shown to King Varaguṇa Pāṇḍya
II.41.70 The Chapter in Which Firewood Is Sold
II.42.30 The Chapter in Which a Special Letter Is Presented
II.43.18 The Chapter in Which a Wooden Plank Is Presented
II.44.44 The Chapter of Victory in a Dispute over Music
II.45.63 The Chapter in Which the Piglets Are Breast-Fed (58)
II.46.18 The Chapter in Which Baby Piglets Are Made Royal Ministers (139–40)
II.47.23 The Chapter in Which Instruction Is Given to the Crow (59)
II.48.25 The Chapter in Which Final Release Is Granted to the Stork (59)

III. The Volume of the Sacred Snake

III.49.28 The Chapter in Which [the City] Becomes [the City of] the Sacred Snake (38)
III.50.44 The Chapter in Which Arrows Bearing the Name of Sundara Rain Down
III.51.39 The Chapter in Which the Academy Seat Is Granted (40)
III.52.107 The Chapter in Which a Prize of Gold Is Given to Dharmin (127–28)
III.53.27 The Chapter in Which Nakkīraṉ Is Hoisted Ashore
III.54.30 The Chapter in Which Nakkīraṉ Is Taught a Lesson in Grammar
III.55.14 The Chapter in Which a Disagreement among Academy Members Is Resolved
III.56.38 The Chapter of the Resolution of the Disagreement with Iṭaikkāṭaṉ (34, 52)
III.57.64 The Chapter in Which a Net Is Cast (120–22)
III.58.86 The Chapter in Which Instruction Is Given to the Devotee from Vātavūr (42)
III.59.127 The Chapter in Which Foxes Are Made into Horses (42)
III.60.66 The Chapter in Which Horses Are Made into Foxes and the Vaigai River Is Caused to Rise (42)
III.61.114 The Chapter in Which Dirt Is Carried (42)
III.62.68 The Chapter in Which the Pāṇḍya Fever Is Dispelled (42)
III.63.82 The Chapter in Which the Jains Are Impaled (42)
III.64.55 The Chapter in Which [the Presence of] the Vaṉṉi Tree, the Well, and the Liṅga Is Invoked (119–20)
III.65.53 The Chapter of Worship

NOTES

I.

1. St. Paul's formulation of the concept was especially explicit. He regarded Jesus' relation to the Church as a model for the relationship that should exist between husband and wife: "Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the Church and delivered himself up for her . . . ." See Ephesians 5:25ff. See also DeJong (464–69).

2. See Michel (259ff.), where he describes the ceremony in which nuns become "brides of Christ" in the Mass. On this occasion, the bishop who performs the "marriage" asks the candidate, "Do you will to be blessed and consecrated and betrothed to our Lord Jesus Christ?" Rudolph Bell (1985) associates such sustained references in the medieval Christian Italian tradition with extreme forms of asceticism and rebellion against the arbitrary patriarchal norms society imposes on women. In his study of 261 Italian women, he notes that the typical case is one in which the woman,

> rebels against passive, vicarious, dependent Christianity; her piety centers intensely, personally on Jesus and his crucifixion, and she actively seeks an intimate, physical union with God. Once she convinces herself that her spiritual bridegroom communicates directly with her and she thereby achieves true autonomy, the commands of earthly men become trivial. [116]

See also his discussions of Saint Catherine Benincasa of Siena (who believed she wore a bridal ring placed on her finger by Jesus, a ring invisible to all others and made from Jesus' circumcised foreskin) and of Umilana de' Cerchi whose eternal husband would never, she said, desert her as her first, deceased husband had in dying. The later Spanish woman, Saint Teresa of Avila, wrote extensively of her nuptial relationship with Jesus, particularly in her series of meditations on the biblical book the Song of Songs.

3. C. G. Diehl has come to the same conclusion in his discussion of the Madurai marriage festival: ". . . if . . . in bygone days . . . the ritual referred to fertility . . . the color of the festival has nowadays often 'paled' . . . to a joyful observation for general security's sake, not to speak of the feelings of joy and devotion it will create in the crowds" (180).

4. For this understanding of metaphor, see Ian Barbour (13); Max Black (1962); Douglas Berggren (1962, 237ff.); and Sallie McFague (14–20). Gerhart and Russell (120) have put it this way: "A change has occurred because a newly structured world of meanings causes us to see the world through new spectacles." Janet Soskice similarly defines a metaphor as "that figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another" (15).

5. As suggested by David Tracy (104) and by Lakoff and Johnson (139–46). Janet Soskice claims that, "A good metaphor may not simply be an oblique reference to a predetermined subject, but a new vision, the birth of a new understanding, a new referential access. A strong metaphor compels new possibilities of vision," (58).

6. This insight I owe to E. E. Evans-Pritchard's (134–37) analysis of the Nuer statement, "Twins are birds."

7. Note that the written English language—unlike such languages as Tamil or Sanskrit, where there are no upper- and lowercase distinctions between letters—allows for the possibility of metaphor which is both textual and visual. When I write, "Our

father helps us," I am speaking in the context of a human, biological relationship that involves siblings and a parent. But when I write, "Our Father helps us," the word *Father* capitalized clearly refers to no human or biological father. The context changes completely; a transaction between the human and the divine contexts is suggested. A metaphorical reference is posited: two otherwise identical sentences take on very different meanings.

8. Interesting, however, is the process reported by Bryan Pfaffenberger (189) whereby demons are tamed and rendered less malevolent by being placed under the proper control of chaste female deities. Here, they become "bridegrooms" in ceremonies modeled on Śaiva weddings.

9. Western scholars accustomed to the Greek distinction between *agapē* (self-giving love) and *eros* (erotic love) will need to recognize that, in the Indian context, love expressed erotically may also be self-giving.

10. See Goswami (1982, 82–83) for a recent example of this theological approach.

11. The exceptions seem to be those situations in which the female involved is already explicitly married to another. Rādhā, for example, never participates in a marriage ceremony with Kṛṣṇa when, in that text or drama, it is clear that she is married to another male. Similarly, when Śiva makes love with other women or goddesses, the usual understanding is that in doing so he marries them *unless* they are already married to another. In that case, for Śiva at least, we are talking about rape, an act which confirms his occasionally vile disposition. See, for example, Śiva's rape of the wives of the Pine Forest sages in Wendy O'Flaherty (1973, 172–78).

12. Lévi-Strauss (1969, 435) points out that, especially in southern India, "marriage involves a series of interminable obligations on the part of the son-in-law." Why this is so, especially in the south, I will discuss in chapter four.

13. In terms of how this occurs socially, that is, in the caste system, see Gupta (76) and Karve (7). In terms of how it occurs geographically, see Beck (1972, 256–58), especially those discussions of marriage practices among the right divisions. Note that in the *TVP* (II.35.1–7), a Cōḻa king attempts to gain control over the Pāṇṭiya throne by giving his daughter in marriage to a younger brother of the Pāṇṭiya king.

14. See for example *Mahāb.* III.27.1–48, where Arjuna wins Draupadi; *Dēvi Bhāg.* III.27. 1–48, where Sudarśana wins Susikala, the daughter of King Subahu; *Agni* 5.9–12, where Rāma wins Sītā; and *Agni* 13.14, a retelling of the Draupadi episode.

15. M. E. Manickavasagam (333) notes that early Tamil literature (*Kalittokai* 101–4) mentions bull catching as a form of *svayaṃvara* among ancient Tamils. The sport is still practiced today in the Madurai area, but is not, so far as I know, associated explicitly with making choices of grooms.

16. See, for example, *Vishnu* 4.2, in which the ascetic Saubhari marries the daughters of King Mandhata; *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 9.3.2–9, cited by Tripathi (315), in which the Brahmin Cyavana marries King Saryati's daughter; *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 9.15.7 (cited by Tripathi, 315), in which the Brahmin Jamadgni marries King Renu's daughter; *Dēvi Bhāg.* 6.27.30–53, in which the sage Nārada marries Damayanti, the daughter of King Sanjaya; and *Dēvi Bhāg.* 7.4.49–64, in which the ascetic Chayavanamuni marries King Saryati's daughter.

17. It is true that Pārvatī is given several names in the various accounts—for example, in *Vāmana* 27. 1–62 she is called Pārvatī, Kālī, and Ambikā at various points in the same ceremony. But she is consistently called the daughter of the Mountain. It is probably no coincidence that in *Śiva's Sacred Games* the Pāṇṭiya queen who is Śiva's wife has a father named Malayattuvaca Pāṇṭiyaṉ, "The Pāṇṭiyaṉ who comes from the Mountains of the South." *Malayam* is a term for the Malaya hills, as well as for the Potiyam Mountains in the area of Cape Comorin on the southernmost point of the Indian peninsula. The text makes this analogy explicit (*TVP* I.4.77). In addition, when

the Pāṇṭiya queen Taṭātakai arrives at the northern mountain range to battle Śiva's forces, the king of that mountain range recognizes his daughter and greets her with tears of joy (*TVP* I.5.27). See also the descriptions of Śiva's marriage in *Vāmana* 27. 1–62 in Dimmitt and Van Buitenen (167–71), *Brahm.* IV.44.54–59, *Vishnu* I.103.1–64, and *Śiva* III.48.46.

18. Note that the theme is repeated also in the *TVP* III.57.1–94, in which Śiva is the suitor marrying a fisherman king's daughter. See chapter five, subsection "Women as Goddesses/Goddesses as Women: The Fluid Nature of Divinity."

II.

1. R. G. Trivedi (76) notes that the iconographic representation of Śiva marrying Pārvatī is termed, in the Sanskrit tradition, *Kalyāṇasundara* or *Vaivāhikkamūrti*. Such sculptures, he notes, are found at a number of places, including Elephanta, Ellora, Kanauj, and "several sites in south India."

2. See also chapter four, subsections entitled "The Primacy of the Goddess," "The Perspective of the Center and the Role of the Female," and "The Central Goddess between Peripheral Gods."

3. Frédérique Marglin (1985, 46–89) supports this view in her description of the kinship dynamics in the city of Puri. She notes that it is through the male line that children inherit their rank, and their social identity. Women do not confer such rank, but are more concerned with nurturing the lineage: its unborn fetuses, its living children, and its deceased ancestors who receive food offerings cooked by women. That women remain pure and chaste is important because they must be fit to perform this nurturing function.

4. There is one qualification to this statement. As mentioned below, a sacred text often must be *attributed to* a Sanskrit source in order to be authentic in the eyes of the faithful.

5. A more philosophical approach to the issue is presented by Leszek Kolakowski:

> One may speak of the "escape into irrationality," yet the expression carries a strong and contestable value judgement. In stigmatizing beliefs or kinds of behavior as "irrational," we necessarily imply a well-defined concept of *Ratio* and this concept itself is always open to doubt: can we produce any compelling grounds for a definition of *Ratio* without employing criteria whose validity depends on the previous acceptance of this very concept? And so, let us talk not of an "escape into irrationality," but of an expanding awareness of the irreducibly different ways in which religious beliefs are validated in contrast to scientific propositions, of the incommensurable meanings of "validity" in those respective areas . . . . [16]

6. The Sanskrit *sthalapurāṇa* tends to be a more localized form of another Sanskrit genre called the *māhātmya*. Or, seen from another perspective, the *māhātmya* may be regarded as a more widely known and accepted *sthalapurāṇa*. Frequently, a Sanskrit *purāṇa* will contain collections of *māhātmyas*, although the distinctions between *purāṇas* and *māhātmyas* are not hard and fast either. The *Dēvimāhātmya*, for example, resembles more the traditional *purāṇa* than it does the *māhātmya*.

7. The Sanskrit works contain much more than details about exploits of the gods. Pargiter's characterization is to the point. Included are accounts of "theogony, cosmogony, genealogies, . . . kings, *ṛśis*, religious belief, worship, observances, philosophy, political ordinances, and opinions about all kinds of miscellaneous matters—the whole illustrated and enforced by tales, legends, old songs, anecdotes, and fables." See *ERE*, 10: 447.

8. Shulman (1976, 129) corroborates this opinion. Zvelebil (1974, 178–79) ranks the document among the four most important of the Tamil *talapurāṇa* texts from the point of view of literary accomplishment. The *TVP* is the only Tamil place-history mentioned in the *ERE* (5:3).

9. Usually, these versions are based on Parañcōti. See, for example, Mutaliyār and Pulavar Aracu. Summaries in Western languages include Dessigane, Pattabiramin, and Filliozat 1960, the most extensive; Taylor, which is rather sketchy; and Loud, a retelling of the first eighteen of Śiva's games, based on Mutaliyār's prose rendering.

10. This date is affirmed by Vēṅkaṭacāmi Nāṭṭār (*TVP* 1:12, introduction); Zvelebil (1974, 179); Shulman (1980, 353); Jesudasan and Jesudasan (211); Kiruṣṇacāmi (179); and Meenakshisundaram (165). Other estimates range from the sixteenth (Dessigane, Pattabiramin, and Filliozat 1960, ii) to the eleventh centuries (Chitty, 64).

11. Mathurā of northern India was the capital of the royal Sūrasena dynasty, and it has often been associated with Madurai of southern India. Indeed, the southern Madurai is sometimes called *Ten Maturai* ("southern Madurai") in order to distinguish it from the northern city associated with the deity Kṛṣṇa.

12. Reports from recent (1986) visitors to the temple indicate that the "fossilized tree stump," as it was described by a priest, has been moved outside the inner sanctum of Sundareśvara and that it now is located in an adjacent corridor.

13. Among the variety of scenes from the *TVP* depicted in stone carvings there are: (a) Śiva breast-feeding piglets (II.45.1–63), (b) Śiva appearing as a mud carrier (III.61.1–114), (c) the wedding of Śiva and Mīṉāṭci (I.V.1–199), (d) Śiva as a fisherman (III.57.1–94), (e) Śiva as a bangle seller (II.32.1–36), (f) Śiva dancing on his right foot (I.24.1–29), (g) Śiva as a wonder-working magician (I.20.1–24), and several others. For the location in the temple of these various statues, see Paḷaniyappaṉ 146–78; and Pañcanatam Piḷḷai 1970, 56–60. Note that the last author (p.58) describes a statue of one of the sports mentioned by Nampi but not included in Parañcōti's *TVP*: the episode in which the tigress breast-feeds a fawn.

14. The Cēra and Cōḷa kingdoms can be traced at least to the first century B.C.E. Northern sources often refer to the three kingdoms as a unit, as does Tamil literature. See Schwartzberg (20–21, 174).

15. The text mentions specific poems attributed to Nakkīraṉ. These are (1) "Angry Grace" (*Kōpa Piracātam*, *TVP* III.51.23; (2) "Songs to the Great God" (*Peruntēvapāṇi*, *TVP* III.51.24); and (3) "Residence of the Seven Proclamations" (*Eḻukūṟṟirukkai*, *TVP* III.51.24). Our commentator quotes from each extensively, though he does not mention specific source citations. See the commentary sections for *TVP* III.51.23 and 24.

16. In *TVP* III.57.10 Śiva curses his son Murugan to be reborn one day as the deaf-mute son of a merchant. There is an implicit relationship, I would suggest, between that episode and this one, though neither our commentator nor the text makes it explicit.

17. Kapila is credited with the authorship of *Iṉṉānāṟpatu*, *Kuriñcippāṭṭu*, and *Kuṟiñcikkali*. Paraṇaṉ is credited with the authorship of selected portions of the *Eṭṭutokai*. Nakkīraṉ is credited with the single work entitled *Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai*.

III.

1. Note that the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (9.1.13–32, 36–39) recounts the story of King Vaisvata Manu whose "son-producing sacrifice" also brought forth a daughter. The daughter, named Ilā, by Viṣṇu's grace is later transformed into a son named Sudyumna.

2. On the value of *kaṟpu* for effecting just such miracles see George Hart (1973) and

B. E. F. Beck (1974). The revelation granted Kāñcaṉamālai is reintroduced later as a part of the discussions of the Madurai townspeople who wonder what was the cause of Śiva's coming to Madurai to marry their queen. See my translation of I.5.122. in appendix A.

3. Among the texts he has cited in which marriages among deities play an important role are: *Tirupperūrppurāṇam* 29.1–16, 20.1–34; *Cucīntirastalapurāṇam* 17.1–10; and *Kamminākumarittalapurāṇam* 14–17.

4. On the role of marriage as a way of both reflecting and creating an ordered cosmos, see below, chapter five, subsection entitled "The Order Marriage Brings About." Other interpretations of Mīnākṣī's third breast include three offered by J. Lindsay Opie (217–20). They are (1) that the presence of the third breast signifies spiritual virginity which is lost "in mystical marriage with Śiva," (2) that the third breast symbolizes a surplus of fertility and maternal character, and (3) that the third breast provided Mīnākṣī protection against threatening males, "like the miraculous growth of beards or other deformities in Christian legends to protect virgin saints from pagan suitors." Kumarakuruparacuvāmikal (*Mīṉāṭciyammai...*) claims that the third breast on Mīnākṣī is simply intended as symmetry to match Śiva's third eye.

5. One reason why he is not really like that is because of the differences in kinship structures between the Tamils and those of northern India, among whom the Sanskrit texts tend to have been written. Briefly, the son-in-law in the Tamil south is much closer to his new in-laws because he is marrying into a family he already knows closely and which already knows him. He is, already, the bride's cross-cousin. In northern India, however, the son and his family are feared and frequently they act in such a way as to deserve that attitude. See below, chapter four, subsection "The Festival and Dravidian Kinship Relations."

IV.

1. See Nambiar and Narayana Kurup (29ff.). Among Śaiva temples in which the marriage is a part of the annual major temple festival they list Tiruvōṟṟiyūr, Tiruvaiyāṟṟu, Kāñcippuram, Kapālīcuvarar, and Madurai.

2. See, for example, the discussions of how two originally separate festivals, one pastoral (Pesaḥ) and the other agricultural (Matzoth), came to be perceived and explained in Hebrew scriptures as integral parts of the same Exodus event (Sandmel, 376–77; Oesterley, 113) and W. C. Lambart's article on Babylonian ritual, in which a new explanation for an ancient ritual develops.

3. See Hudson (1971, 198) for one explanation of why Mīnāakṣī is present in two forms. One of the temple officials whom I asked about it explained that the goddess is sufficient unto herself, but the god needs a spouse in order to be complete. It may be significant that in the *TVP* the goddess did, in fact, rule the Pāṇḍya kingdom unmarried, but none of the kings ruled unmarried.

4. On the second day of the festival (11 April) at the same temple, a Vaiṣṇava priest appeared and repeated this homage. But that same evening a group of Vaiṣṇava devotees, including a priest standing nearby, pointedly ignored the entire procession. I asked one of them why, and he said that Vaiṣṇavas will only worship Mīnākṣī and not Śiva. On the morning of the third day of the festival, a group of devotees appeared at the doorway to acknowledge the procession. This time, one of the Vaiṣṇavas approached the priest attending the image of Mīnākṣī and was given some of the sacred ash being distributed to other devotees. It also struck me that in the second group of chanting priests at the end of the morning procession, one man with Vaiṣṇava markings walked and sang.

5. See *TVP* I.4.36ff. Verses 38 and 40 describe Mīnākṣī's ensuing procession atop an elephant. No one in the temple seemed concerned that, though the textual description involved an elephant vehicle, the actual ritual vehicle was the "Silver Throne." *TVP* I.4.40 indicates that, atop the elephant, Mīnākṣī made the traditional circuit of the newly crowned ruler around the outer geographical limits of the city.

6. During the full moon of the month of Paṅkuṉi, Śiva and Mīnākṣī reciprocate the wedding visit by attending the wedding ceremony of Skanda at Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam. The temple of Skanda at Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam is administered by officials of the Mīnākṣī Temple, and is referred to as a "subtemple" of the larger Madurai establishment. See Pañcanatam Piḷḷai (1970, 179).

7. For those claiming it was in Māci, the more tenable position in my opinion, see Cāmpacivaṉ (94); Baliga (399); Hamnett (39); Parantāmanār (93); Shenoy (105); Kōpālacāmi Nāyakkar (19); Cantiracēkara Paṭṭar (108, 111); Cāstirikaḷ (3–4); and Centil Turavi (214–15). Those suggesting that the Marriage Festival was originally in Paṅkuṉi include: Naṭarājaṉ 1972 (143); Pañcanatam Piḷḷai 1970 (101); and Fred Clothey, who pointed out in a discussion that the full moon of the month of Paṅkuṉi is the proper time for the festival marriages of Śaiva deities, and that Skanda's marriage is celebrated at Paḷani and Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam in the month of Paṅkuṉi (Clothey 1975); and M. Shanmugam Piḷḷai, who mentioned that, in any case, Citrā is not an auspicious time for weddings. This point is confirmed in the *Agni Purāṇa* (CLIII,11–14): "Weddings should not be celebrated in the month of Citrā."

8. Note that, according to Archer (1985, 43), it is a northern Indian custom in marriage for the bride to be given away by the father as she sits in his lap. However, it is the bride's youngest brother who performs the "water pouring ceremony."

9. This particular issue has been analyzed in a similar fashion by Dennis Hudson (1977). Much of the material that appears here was originally part of a manuscript I wrote in March 1974. Similarities in the approach are coincidental, confirming in my mind the centrality of the issues with which we have dealt independently.

10. The dynamics described here are also true of the south. But often they are overridden by the additional complications of cross-cousin marriage. In the south, cross-cousin marriage is considered an *ideal*, but there it is not always practiced in part because there may be no marriageable person in the matched category of cross-cousin. Therefore, the northern emphasis on father-in-law/son-in-law relationships also appears in Tamil materials. See, for example, the marriage between Indrāṇī and Skanda at Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam, where Indra, the bride's father, gives her away in the *Kanta Purāṇam* V.2.228–46 (Irāmacāmip Pulavar, 400–402; Dessigane and Pattabiramin, 170).

V.

1. See, for example, I.14.3–59, "The Chapter in Which a Discus Is Thrown at Indra's Crown," concerning a protracted conflict between King Ugra Pāṇḍya and Indra. Indra is finally defeated and disgraced over the issue of where and when it should rain. See also I.18.1–19, "The Chapter in Which the Ocean Released by Varuṇa Is Destroyed," where Indra develops a marked antipathy for Abhiṣeka Pāṇḍya, who dared to worship Śiva at the same time and place Indra did. Indra's antipathy ends in his aborted scheme to use Varuṇa to flood the city.

2. See also chapter one, the section entitled "Sacred Marriage in Hinduism: An Overview."

3. See, for example, Brubaker (351ff.) on the mythology associated with Māriyammaṉ, the village goddess of disease; the story of Kaṇṇaki, who attains super-

natural powers to destroy the city of Madurai by virtue of the unjust murder of her husband by the Pāṇḍya king in *Cilappatikāram* (Maturai Kāṇṭam, verses 190–215); the mythology of Manasā, goddess of snakes, who becomes a violent, death-dealing goddess as a result of her unjust treatment at the hands of Śiva in Maity (1–84); and the hypothesis of Edward Harper (1969) that the extent to which supernatural powers are attributed to women correlates with the extent to which women are treated unjustly in orthodox Hindu society.

4. This rebirth for Subrahmaṇya, or rather the consequences of it, are narrated in *TVP*.III.55.1–14, in which the deaf-mute boy is asked to distinguish, miraculously, which of the poems of the Tamil Literary Academy are most worthy.

5. See *Phantom India* (16 mm., seven fifty-two-minute segments), directed and narrated by Louis Malle. Color, available through *New Yorker Films*, 16 West 61st Street, New York 10023, filmed 1967–68.

6. Precisely what the *saṃskāras* do remains an issue. The Sanskrit word implies a "making complete" or a "making perfect." The Tamil Lexicon (p. 3,908) designates the *saṃskāra* as a "purificatory ceremony," an interpretation confirmed by Inden and Nicholas (7), Monier-Williams (353), Pandey (16), and Manu (II.26 in Buhler). Diehl (191), Beck (1966, 29), and deBary (I:230) emphasize the *saṃskāra* as a rite of passage, one intended to protect.

7. Note that in the longer list of forty *saṃskāras*, marriage is not the last of them. In the *Gautama Dharma Sūtra* (8.14–26), marriage is to be followed by the five sacrifices to the gods, the seven cooked-food sacrifices, and the seven obligation sacrifices (see also Pandey, 20). But without marriage *none* of these sacrifices or obligations can legitimately be done. The marriage *saṃskāra* thereby remains preeminent, for the performance of the other *saṃskāras* is not preconditioned on any other *saṃskāra*. Here, marriage can be seen as the climax of the *saṃskāra* cycle, with the sacrifices following as a denouement.

8. For a historical account of the treatment of widows in Hinduism see "Position of Widows" in *ERE* (8: 453–54). Harper (1969, 91–93) notes that the dreadful treatment of widows seems to be inversely proportional to a caste's ritual and social status: brahmin widows having the most difficult life and low-caste widows experiencing little social or ritual ostracism.

9. In this connection it seems significant that among the early Aryans the Sanskrit word for "enemy" (*bhrātṛvya*) also meant "cousin" (Hume, 293).

10. For a discussion of the story see chapter three, under the subsection "Śiva and the Animals of the Kingdom."

11. In a very different context, Lawrence Foster has demonstrated how one difficult period in recent American social and religious history, the early to the late 1800s, saw the rise of three significant religious groups whose basic challenge to society was reflected in their attempts to introduce alternatives to the acceptable structures of marriage. The Mormons practiced polygyny, the Oneida Perfectionists practiced "group marriage," and the Shakers advocated celibacy in the context of sexually integrated "families."

VI.

1. One of the most comprehensive explanations of how deities are related to each other as well as to human beings has been developed by McKim Marriott and Ronald Inden in their discussion of "substance and code for conduct." According to this theory, all genera of beings including the animal, the human, and the divine, have their proper code for conduct "built in," contained within the substances either inherited in their physical bodies or acquired through exchange transactions with animals, humans, or

deities. These exchange transactions are therefore carefully regulated in order to preserve or achieve purity. See Marriott and Inden.

2. This latter option seems to be the norm in the worship of Murukaṉ at Paḻaṉi. In Madurai, all three options are common, as they are among village devotees of the goddess Māriyammaṉ. See Fuller's comments on this process in the Madurai Temple (1984, p. 21, note 33). Moreno-Arcas (1984b, 19) makes the fascinating observation that "the more universal a god is, that is the more actively he engages in substantial transactions with all kinds of humans, the more concerned he appears with repayment." If we play with this metaphor a bit, we discover that this seems to make some financial sense: a banking operation that serves the larger public is more likely to observe stricter rules in its transactions. In contrast, a loan to a "relative," someone to whom the debtor is in some sense related, is less likely to involve a strict, principled arrangement, in part because the loan is secured by other connections and relationships. Possibly, devotion in the Madurai Temple is, to a greater extent, predicated on kinship metaphors, while devotion in Paḻaṉi more often evokes financial metaphors. At the least, I am suggesting that financial metaphors and kinship metaphors are not mutually exclusive ways of thinking about and acting out devotion.

3. The term *vēṇṭutal* may be used synonymously here. It means either a request, a desire, or a purchase and so also carries with it the implications of exchange between deity and devotee based on the expressed need of a devotee (*TL*: 3825).

4. Information provided by Professor Cyriac Pullapillay in a paper presented in Chicago at the 1976 meeting of the Association of Asian Studies. The shrine to Ettumanur Devan is located about ten miles north of Kottayam, and the Christian shrine to Aruvithura St. George is located just northeast of the small town of Erattupetta. In local mythology, the two deities are said to be brothers, and many Hindus and Christians will go to both shrines when especially serious snake bites need to be countered.

5. The introduction here of an additional metaphoric concept, that of deities as medical doctors, some of whom are specialists and some of whom are general practitioners, is not one I have taken from Tamil categories or concepts. Still, deities do tend to be known either for their specific talents or for their more general capacities.

6. The story of Kaṇṇappanāyaṉār in the *Periyapurāṇam* (I.8.1–186) indicates, however, that even meat offerings given to Śiva out of naive devotion are acceptable to the Lord.

7. More often used to refer to God in Christianity, but also used to describe Śiva in Hinduism.

8. Used to describe the virgin Mother of God in Roman Catholic Christianity and the Great Goddess in Sakta Hinduism. See also McLaughlin.

9. Used in Christianity in reference to the Church as the Bride of Christ, and to Christ as the bridegroom. Note also that the Latter-Day Saints speak of God as having a wife. In the case of Hinduism, nearly every male deity has a spouse: for example, Śiva has Pārvatī; Viṣṇu has Lakṣmī; and Brahmā has Saraswatī. There is some disagreement among anthropologists about the propriety of the use of the term spouse as a kinship term. My doing so here is more a matter of convenience than of theoretical commitment. The issue is one which, for my purposes, is not especially relevant.

10. Used to refer to Jesus in Christianity and to such deities as Kṛṣṇa, Gaṇeśa, and Murukaṉ in Hinduism.

11. A more obscure kinship term, but found, for example, in the Christian Shaker doctrine of Mother Anne as Jesus' female counterpart and in the Hindu, Saiva tradition in reference to such goddesses as Māriyammaṉ, Manasā, Mīṉākṣi, and Santoshi Ma.

12. They are "models of" and "models for." On the distinction, see Geertz (7–8), Harré (37–41), and Soskice (102–3). I have chosen to avoid a discussion of the relation-

ship between metaphors and models because it is not directly relevant to my argument. Those concerned with the distinction might consult Soskice, who says that

> models can be distinguished from and related to metaphors in this way; an object or state of affairs is said to be a model when it is viewed in terms of some other object or state of affairs. A model need not be a metaphor, for a model need not be linguistic at all, as with a model train. . . . Talk based on models will be metaphorical, so model and metaphor . . . are closely linked; the latter is what we have when we speak on the basis of the former. [55]

13. Note, though, that in *TVP* III.57.50, when Śiva takes the form of a young fisherman, he identifies himself as the son (*maintaṉ*) of the greatest (i.e., king) of Madurai fishermen. It is in this guise that he marries the daughter of another king of fishermen, a daughter who is really the goddess reborn in human form.

14. See chapter five, subsection entitled "Women as Goddesses/Goddesses as Women: The Fluid Nature of Divinity." Professor Paul Younger reports in a personal letter that during the major cart festival of the Śaiva temple of Citamparam, the image of Śiva is taken in procession through the town, and during an interlude in the procession in that section of the town where fishermen reside, Śiva is honored by that community as a son-in-law and is so addressed. The attending priest seemed embarrassed about it, but did nothing to stop it.

15. A similar dynamic occurs in the perceived history of the growth of Islam and its relation to Judaism. The Islamic tradition recounts its break from Judaism by tracing its line through Hagar, Sarah's handmaiden, and through Ishmael, Hagar's son by Abraham. Ishmael, according to the Islamic version of the tradition, was Abraham's first son, and therefore the rightful heir to Abraham's authority. It was Ishmael, rather than Isaac, who was the intended sacrificial victim when God tested Abraham. In the Islamic tradition, enmity between Jew and Muslim takes as its starting point the unjust treatment of Ishmael and Hagar by Ishmael's father Abraham and Abraham's wife Sarah. The enmity between half brothers and their mothers becomes a model here for the enmity between Muslims and Jews.

16. The place-history of Aḻakarkōvil, though paying great attention to Malayadhvaja's role in the founding of that temple, claims that he was not Mīnākṣī's father (as *Śiva's Sacred Games* claims), but her grandfather and that Mīnākṣī was born to Kubjasundara Pāṇḍya as a result of a boon granted by Viṣṇu (Aḻakar). See Hudson (1982, 121).

17. There are some exceptions to this rule, two of which are the Nayar women of Kerala and the Puhari women in the foothills of the Himalaya mountains.

18. Though I have dealt with the concept of deity as son-in-law, I have mentioned nothing of references we find to Kṛṣṇa in the Vaiṣṇava tradition as a son in relation to whom the parents are devotees. Another devotional metaphor not dealt with in this study because it is not strictly speaking a kinship metaphor is that of deity as clandestine or extramarital lover. The notion, found more frequently in northern India in the context of devotion to Kṛṣṇa, often assumes the existence of a marital relationship as the backdrop against which it occurs. See chapter one, subsection entitled "Sacred Marriage in Hinduism: An Overview."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

English Language Works, by Title

Dictionary of Oriental Literatures. New York:Basic Books, 1974.
Encyclopedia Britannica. 15th ed., s.v. "Hieros Gamos," "Madurai," and "Caste Systems."
Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics. James Hastings, gen. ed. 13 vols. New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1924–27.
Indian Express (Madras Edition). *The Sunday Standard Magazine Section.* 12 May 1968. Article entitled "Chitra Festival," cited by Dennis Hudson in "Two Citrā Festivals in Madurai." In *Asian Religions: 1971*, edited by Bardwell Smith, 191–222 and p.220, note 77. Chambersburg, Pa: The American Academy of Religion, 1971.
Indian Express (Madurai edition). 24 March 1969, "Water Scarcity in Madurai"; 24 June 1969, "Narrow Escape"; and 30 July 1969, "Walk-Out in Madurai Council."
Know Madurai. 6th ed. Unsigned guidebook. Madurai: T. V. Sundaram Iyengar and Sons, 1965.
Sri Kallalagar Devasthanam Administrative Report. Aḷakarkōvil: n.p., 1963.
Tamil Lexicon. 6 vols. with 1 vol. supplement. Madras: Madras University, 1924–36. Reprinted Madras: Prasad Process, 1965.

European Language Works, by Author

Albanese, Catherine. "Mormonism and the Male-Female God: An Exploration in Active Mysticism." *Sunstone* 5, no. 3 (1980): 52–58.
Aravamuthan, T. G. "The Maturai Chronicles and the Tamil Academies." *Journal of Oriental Research*, Madras, 5 (1931): 108–24, 196–214 and 6 (1932): 89–105, 274–94, 322–40.
Archer, W. G. *The Loves of Krishna in Indian Painting and Poetry.* New York: Grove Press, n.d.
____ . *Songs for the Bride: Wedding Rites of Northern India.* Edited by Barbara Stoler Miller and Mildred Archer. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
Asher, R. E., and Radhakrishnan, R., eds. *A Tamil Prose Reader.* London: Cambridge University Press, 1971.
Babb, Lawrence A. "Marriage and Malevolence: The Uses of Sexual Opposition in a Hindu Pantheon." *Ethnology* 9, no. 2 (1970): 137–48.
Baliga, B.S., ed. *Madras District Gazetteers: Madurai.* Madras: Government of Madras Press, 1960.
Barbour, Ian. *Myths, Models, and Paradigms—A Comparative Study in Science and Religion.* New York: Harper and Row, 1974.
Beals, Alan R. "Conflict and Festivals in South India." In *Religion in South Asia*, edited by Edward Harper, 98-118. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964.
Beck, Brenda E. F. "The Examination of Marriage Ritual Among Selected Groups in South India." B. Litt. thesis, Oxford University, Somerville College, 1964.
____ . "Social and Conceptual Order in Koṅku: a Region of South India." Ph.D.diss., Oxford University, Somerville College, 1968.

_____. *Peasant Society in Konku: A Study of Right and Left Subcastes*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1972.

_____. "The Kin Nucleus in Tamil Folklore." In Trautmann, 1–28. 1974.

_____. "The Goddess and the Demon: A local South Indian festival and its wider context." In Biardeau, 83–136. 1981.

_____. "The Courtship of Vaḷḷi and Murugan: Some Parallels with the Rādhā-Krishna Story." In Hawley and Wulff, 262–76. 1982.

Bell, Rudolph M. *Holy Anorexia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

Berggren, Douglas. "The Use and Abuse of Metaphor." *The Review of Metaphysics*, 16 (December 1962): 240–49.

Beteille, Andre. "Social Organization of Temples in a Tanjore Village." *History of Religions* 5, no.1 (summer 1965): 74–92.

Bhattacharji, Sukumari. *The Indian Theogony: A Comparative Study of Indian Mythology From the Vedas to the Puranas*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Bhattacharya, France. "La Déesse et le royaume selon le Kālaketu Upākhyāna du Caṇḍī Maṅgala." In Biardeau, 17–54.

Biardeau, Madeleine, ed. *Autour de la déesse hindoue. Puruṣārtha: sciences sociales en Asie du Sud*. Paris: Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1981. "Introduction," 9–16.

Birnbaum, Philip, trans. *The Passover Haggadah*. New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1952.

Black, Max. *Models and Metaphors*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962.

Blackburn, Stuart. "Death and Deification: Folk Cults in Hinduism." *History of Religions* 24, no. 3 (February 1985): 255–74.

Blackman, A. M. "Myth and Ritual in Ancient Egypt." In Hooke, 15–399. 1933.

Bleeker, C. J. *Die Geburt Eines Gottes: Eine Studie Über Den Ägyptischen Gott Min und Sein Fest*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1956.

Bolle, Kees W. "Reflections On a Puranic Passage." *History of Religions* 2, no.2 (winter 1963): 286–91.

Boswell, Fred and Jeanetta. *What Men Or Gods Are These? A Genealogical Approach to Classical Mythology*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1980.

Brandon, S. G. F. "The Myth and Ritual Position Critically Considered." In Hooke, 261–79. 1958.

_____, gen. ed. *A Dictionary of Comparative Religion*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970.

Breckenridge, Carol Appadurai. "The Śri Miṉākṣi Sundarēṣvarar Temple: Worship and Endowments in South India, 1833 to 1925." Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1976.

Brown, C. Mackenzie. "The Theology of Rādhā in the Purāṇas." In Hawley and Wulff, 57–71. 1982.

Brown, W. Norman. "The Name of the Goddess Mīnākṣi, 'Fish-Eye.'" *The Journal of the American Oriental Society* 67 (1947): 209–14.

Brubaker, Richard. "The Ambivalent Mistress: A Study of the South Indian Village Goddesses and Their Religious Meaning." Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1978.

Buhler, G., trans. *The Laws of Manu*. The Sacred Books of the East Series, edited F. Max Muller, vol. 25. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1886.

Bultmann, Rudolf. *Theology of the New Testament*. New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1955.

Burrow, T., and Emeneau, M. B. *A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary*. London: Oxford University Press, 1961. Reprinted, 1966.

Carter, Anthony T. "A Comparative Analysis of Systems of Kinship and Marriage in

South Asia." *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain*, 1973, 29–54.

____ . "Hierarchy and the Concept of the Person in Western India." In Östör, Fruzzetti, and Barnett, 118–42. 1982.

Chadwick, Henry. *The Early Church*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967.

Chakravarti, A. *Jaina Literature in Tamil*. Arrah: Jaina Siddhanta Bhavana, 1941.

Chitty, S. C. *The Tamil Plutarch*. Jaffna: n.p., 1859.

Clothey, Fred. "Skanda-Ṣaṣṭi: A Festival in Tamil India." *History of Religions* 8, no. 2 (February 1969): 236–60.

____ . "Pankuni Uttiram: Festival of Marriage." Unpublished manuscript, 1975.

Coburn, Thomas B. "Consort of None, *Śakti* of All: The Vision of the *Devī-Māhātmya*." In Hawley and Wulff, 153–65. 1981.

Cohen, Ted. "Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy." In Sacks, 1–10.

Coomaraswamy, Ananda. *Hinduism and Buddhism*. New York: Philosophical Library Publications, n.d.

Cordell, Linda S. and Beckerman, Stephen, eds. *The Versatility of Kinship*. New York: Academic Press, 1980.

Courtright, Paul B. *Gaṇeśa: Lord of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

____ . "On This Holy Day in My Humble Way: Aspects of *Pūjā*." In Waghorne et al., 33–52. 1985a.

Daniel, Sheryl B. "Marriage in Tamil Culture: The Problem of Conflicting 'Models.'" In Wadley, 61–92. 1980.

David, Kenneth. "Until Marriage Do Us Part: A Cultural Account of Jaffna Tamil Categories for Kinsman." *Man* 8, no. 4 (December 1973): 1–15.

deBary, W. T., ed. *Sources of Indian Tradition*. 2 vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1967.

deFraine, J. "Les Implications du 'patternism.'" *Biblica* 37, no. 1 (1956): 59–73.

DeJong, Mary G. "'I Want to be Like Jesus': The Self-Defining Power of Evangelical Hymnody," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 54, no. 3 (Fall 1986): 461–98.

Dessigane, R., and Pattabiramin, P. Z. *La Légende de Skanda Selon le Kandapuranam Tamoul et l'iconographie*. Pondicherry: Institut francais d'indologie, 1967.

Dessigane, R.; Pattabiramin, P. Z..; and Filliozat, J. *La Légende des jeux de Civa à Madurai d'après les textes et les peintures* . 2 fascicules. Pondicherry: Institut francais d'indologie, 1960.

____ . *Les Légendes Civaites de Kāñcipuram: Analyse de textes et iconographie*. Pondicherry: Institut francais d'indologie, 1964.

Devakunjari, D. "Madurai Thru Ages—From Earliest Times to 1801 A.D." Ph.D. diss., University of Madras, 1955.

Diehl, Carl Gustav. *Instrument and Purpose: Studies on Rites and Rituals in South India*. Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1956.

Dilthey, Wilhelm. *Pattern and Meaning in History: Thoughts on History and Society*. Edited with introduction by H. P. Rickman. 3rd ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1959.

Dimmitt, Cornelia, and van Buitenen, J. A. B., eds.and trans. *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Purāṇas*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978.

Dimock, Edward. *The Place of the Hidden Moon: Erotic Mysticism in the Vaiṣṇava-Sahajiya Cult of Bengal*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

____ . "Doctrine and Practice Among the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal." In Singer, 41-64. 1968.

Dimock, E.; Gerow, E.; Naim, C.; Ramanujan, A. K.; Roadarmel, G.; and van

Buitenen, J. A. B. *The Literatures of India*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Douglas, Nik. *Tantra Yoga*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1971.

Dubois, Abbé J. A. *Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906.

Dumézil, Georges. *Marriages indo-européens*. Paris: Gallimard, 1969.

Dumont, Louis. "The Dravidian Kinship Terminology as an Expression of Marriage." *Man* 53 (March 1953): 34–39.

_____. "La double fête du Madura." *Marco Polo* 22 (1956): 35–48.

_____. *Une Sous-Caste de l'Inde du Sud: Organisation Sociale et Réligion des Pramalai Kallar*. Paris: Mouton, 1957.

_____. "A Structural Definition of a Folk Deity of Tamilnad: Aiyanar the Lord." *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, n.s., no. 3 (1959): 75–87.

_____ and Pocock, David. "Pure and Impure." *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, n.s., no.3 (July 1959): 31–35.

_____. "The Functional Equivalents of the Individual in Caste Society." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 8 (October 1965): 85–99.

_____. *Affinity as a Value: Marriage Alliance in South India, with Comparative Essays on Australia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Eck, Diana L. "Gaṅgā: The Goddess in Hindu Sacred Geography." In Hawley and Wulff, 166–83. 1981.

Egnor, Margaret. "On the Meaning of Śakti to Women in Tamil Nadu." In Wadley, 1–34. 1980.

Eliade, Mircea. "La Terre mère et les hierogamies cosmiques." *Eranos Jahrbuch* 22 (1953): 57–95.

_____. *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. Translated by Rosemary Sheed. Meridian paperback. New York: World Publishing, 1963.

_____. *Australian Religions: An Introduction*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971.

Elmore, Wilber Theodore. *Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism*. University of Nebraska Studies, vol.15. Lincoln, 1915.

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. "A Problem of Nuer Religious Thought." In *Myth and Cosmos*, edited by John Middleton, 127-148. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967.

Falkenstein, Adam. *Sumerische und Akkadische Hymnen und Gebete*. Zurich: Artemis-Verlag, 1953.

_____. *The Sumerian Temple City*. Malibu, California: Undena Publications, 1974.

Fernandez, James W. "The Performance of Ritual Metaphors." In *The Social Use of Metaphor: Essays on the Anthropology of Rhetoric*, edited by J. David Sapir and J. Christopher Crocker, 100-131. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977.

Festinger, Leon. *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Evanston, Ill.: Row and Peterson, 1957.

_____ and Carlsmith, J.M. "Cognitive Consequences of Forced Compliance." *Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology* 58 (1959): 203–10.

Filliozat, J. "Tamil and Sanskrit in South India." *Tamil Culture* 4, no. 4 (October 1955): 225–30.

_____. "Le Veda et la littérature tamoule ancienne." In *Mélanges d'indianisme à la mémoire de Louis Renou*. Paris: Publication de L'Institut de civilisation indienne, 1968.

_____, ed. and trans. *Le Tiruppāvai d'Āṇṭāḷ: Un Texte tamoul de dévotion vishnouite*. Pondicherry: Institut francais d'indologie, 1972.

_____. *Laghu-prabandhāh. Choix d'articles d'indologie*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974.

Fontenrose, Joseph. *The Ritual Theory of Myth*. University of California Folklore Series, no. 18. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966.
Foster, Lawrence. *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984.
Fox, James J. "Sister's Child as Plant: Metaphors in an Idiom of Consanguinity." In *Rethinking Kinship and Marriage*, edited by Rodney Needham, 219-252. A. S. A. Monographs, no. 11. London: Tavistock, 1971.
Francis, W. *Madras District Gazeteers: Madura*. Madras: Government Press, 1907.
Frankfort, Henri. *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948.
Frazer, Sir James George. *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*. 3rd ed. London: Macmillan, 1919.
____ . *The Golden Bough*. 12 vols. New York: Macmillan, 1922. Abridged edition, 1 vol., 1963.
Freud, Sigmund. *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*. New York: New Republic, 1927.
Fruzzetti, Lina M. *The Gift of a Virgin: Women, Marriage, and Ritual in a Bengali Society*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1982.
____ ; Östör, Ákos; and Barnett, Steve. "The Cultural Construction of the Person in Bengal and Tamilnadu." In Östör, Fruzzetti, and Barnett, 8-30. 1982.
Fuller, C. J. "The Divine Couple's Relationship in a South Indian Temple: Mīnākṣī and Sundareśvara at Madurai." *History of Religions* 19, no.4 (May 1980): 321-48.
____ . *Servants of the Goddess: The Priests of a South Indian Temple*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
Gadd, C. J. "Babylonian Myth and Ritual." In Hooke, 40-62. 1933.
____ . *Ideas of Divine Rule in the Ancient Near East*. London: Oxford University Press, 1948.
Garce, M., and Mortier, R., eds. *Histoire Général des Réligions*. 5 vols. Paris: Mouton, 1947-52.
Gaster, Theodore H. "Myth and Story." *Numen* 1, no.2 (May 1954): 184-212.
____ . *Thespis: Myth, Ritual, and Drama in the Ancient Near East*. New York: Doubleday, 1961.
Geertz, Clifford. "Religion As a Cultural System." In *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, edited by Michael Banton, 1-46. A. S. A. Monographs, no.3. London: Tavistock, 1969.
Gerhart, Mary and Russell, Allan. *Metaphoric Process: The Creation of Scientific and Religious Understanding*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1984.
Gonda, Jan. *Les Réligions de l'Inde*. 3 vols. Translated by L. Jospin. Paris: Payot, 1962.
____ . *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966.
____ . *Viṣṇuism and Sivaism: A Comparison*. London: Atholene Press, 1970.
Goswami, Shrivasta. "Rādhā: The Play and Perfection of *Rasa*." In Hawley and Wulff, 72-88.
Gough, Kathleen. "Brahman Kinship in a Tamil Village." *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956): 826-53.
Groenwegen-Frankfort, H. A. *Space and Time in the Representational Art of the Ancient Near East*. London: Faber and Faber, 1951.
Gros, Francois. *Le Paripāṭal avec introduction, traduction et notes*. Pondicherry: Institut francais d'indologie, 1968.
Gupta, Giri Raj. *Marriage, Religion, and Society: Patterns of Change in an Indian Village*. New York: Wiley and Sons, 1974.
Guzie, Theodore, and McIlhon, J. *The Forgiveness of Sin*. Chicago: Thomas More Press, 1979.

Hamnett, F. H. *Some Facts About Madurai*. Pasumalai: Lenix Press, 1909.
Hanchett, Suzanne. "Two Women's Ceremonies: Gaurī and Prāṭi." Paper presented to the Conference on Religion in South India, 25 May 1974, Chicago.
Harman, William P. "The Sacred Marriage of Maturai: Myth, Ritual, and Devotion in a South Indian Temple," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1981.
_____. "Kinship Metaphors in the Hindu Pantheon: Śiva as Brother-in-Law and Son-in-Law." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53, no. 3 (September 1985): 411–30.
_____. "The Authority of Sanskrit in Tamil Literature: A Case Study in Tracing a Text to its Sources." *Mankind Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (Spring 1987a): 295–315.
_____. "Two Versions of a Tamil Text and the Contexts in Which They Were Written," *Journal of the Institute of Asian Studies* 5, no. 1 (September 1987b): 1–18.
Harper, Edward. "A Hindu Village Pantheon." *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 15, no. 3 (1959): 227–34.
_____, ed. *Religion in South Asia*. Seattle: Universtiy of Washington Press, 1964.
_____. "Fear and the Status of Women." *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1969): 81–95.
Harper, Edward. "Ritual Pollution as an Integrator of Caste and Religion." In Harper, 191–206.
Harré, R. *The Philosophies of Science: An Introductory Survey*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.
Hart, George, Lucerne. "Woman and the Sacred in Ancient Tamilnad." *Journal of Asian Studies* 32, no.2 (February 1973): 233–51.
_____. "Some Aspects of Kinship in Ancient Tamil Literature." In Trautmann, 29-60. 1974.
_____. *The Poems of Ancient Tamil: Their Milieu and Their Sanskrit Counterparts*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.
_____. *The Relation Between Tamil and Classical Sanskrit Literature*. Vol 10, fasc 2 of *A History of Indian Literature*, edited by J. Gonda. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1976.
_____. "The Nature of Tamil Devotion." In *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India* edited by M. Deshpande and P. Hook, 11–33. Ann Arbor: Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia, no. 14, 1979.
Hawley, John Stratton. *The Butter Thief*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
_____, and Wulff, Donna Marie, eds. *The Divine Consort: Rādhā and the Goddesses of India*. Berkeley Religious Studies Series, no. 3. Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union, 1982.
Heeren, John; Lindsey, Donald B.; and Mason, Marylee. "The Mormon Concept of Mother in Heaven: A Sociological Account of Its Origins and Development." In *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 23, no. 4 (December 1984): 396–411.
Heestermann, J. C. "The Conundrum of the King's Authority." In Richards, 4–26.
Heras, Henry Minkan. *The Mystical Meaning of Possessing "Fish-Eyes."* Bombay: Hind Katabs, 1947.
Hiltebeitel, Alf. *The Ritual of Battle: Krishna in the Mahabharata*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976.
_____. "Draupadī's Hair." In Biardeau (ed.), 179–214, 1981.
Hocart, A. M. "The Cousin in Vedic Ritual." *Indian Antiquary*, no. 54: 16–18.
_____. "Myth and Ritual." *Man* 36, no. 230: 167.
Hooke, S. H., ed. *Myth and Ritual: Essays on the Myth and Ritual of the Hebrews in Relation to the Culture Pattern of the Ancient Near East*. London: Oxford University Press, 1933.

____ . "The Myth and Ritual Pattern of the Ancient Near East." In Hooke, 1-19. 1933a.

____ . "Traces of the Myth and Ritual Pattern in Canaan." In Hooke, 68-86. 1933b.

____ , ed. *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958.

Hudson, Dennis. "Two Citrā Festivals in Madurai." In *Asian Religions: 1971*, edited by Bardwell Smith, 191–222. Chambersburg: The American Academy of Religion, 1971.

____ . "Śiva, Mīnākṣi, Viṣṇu—Reflections on a Popular Myth in Maturai." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 14, no. 1 (January-March 1977): 107–119.

____ . "Two Citrā Festivals in Madurai." In *Religious Festivals in South India and Sri Lanka*, edited by Guy R. Welbon and Glenn E. Yocum, 101-156. New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1982.

Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens*. Boston: Beacon Press Paperback, 1955.

Hume, Robert Ernest, trans. *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*. London: Oxford University Press, 1934.

Husaini, S. A. Q. *The History of the Pandya Country*. Karaikudi: Celvi Patippakam, 1962.

Inden, Ronald. "Ritual, Authority, and Cyclic Time in Hindu Kingship." In *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, edited by J. F. Richards, 28–60. South Asian Studies Publication no.3. Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1978.

____ , and Nicholas, Ralph. *Kinship in Bengali Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.

Jacobsen, Thorkild. "Toward the Image of Tammuz." *History of Religions* 1, no.2 (Winter 1962): 189–213.

____ . *The Treasures of Darkness*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976.

James, E. O. *Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East*. New York: Praeger, 1958.

____ . *The Ancient Gods: The History and Diffusion of Religion in the Ancient Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean*. New York: Capricorn Books, 1964.

Jensen, Adolf. *Myth and Cult Among Primitive People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.

Jesudasan, C. and Jesudasan, H. *A History of Tamil Literature*. Calcutta: Y.M.C.A. Publishing House, 1961.

Jeyechandran, A. V., ed. *Maturait Tirukkōyil: Tirukkuṭa Naṉṉīrāṭṭup Peruviḻā Malar*. Preface by Mu. Varatarācaṉār. Maturai: Aruḷmiku Mīṉāṭci Cuntarēcuvarar Tirukkōyil, 1974.

____ . "The Madurai Temple Gopuras." In Jeyechandran, 367–75.

Jones, J. P., "Madurai." In *ERE*, vol. 8, 240–41.

Kailasapathy, K. *Tamil Heroic Poetry*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.

Kane, Pandurang Vama. *History of Dharmaśāstra*. Government Oriental Series, vol 2, no. 1. Poona: n.p., 1930–62.

Kannapan, Meenan S. "Prayer to Goddess Meenakshi of Houston." *Temple Times* (newsletter published by the Sri Meenakshi Temple Society of Pearland, Texas) 8, no. 1 (January 1986): 12.

Kapadia, K. M. *Marriage and Family in India*. Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1966.

Kārāvēlane, trans.and ed. *Kāreikkālammeiyār: Oeuvres éditées et traduites*. Introduction by Jean Filliozat. Pondicherry: Institut francais d'indologie, 1956.

Karve, Irawati. *Kinship Organization in India*. Madras: G. S. Press, 1953.

Keesing, Roger M. "The Uses of Kinship: Kwaio, Solomon Islands." In Cordell and Beckerman, 29–44. 1980.

Kesavan, A. "The Town Planning of Madurai—A Reconstruction." In Jeyechandran, 220–24, 1974.

Kingsbury, F., and Phillips, G. E., trans. *Hymns of the Tamil Saivite Saints*. Calcutta: Association Press, 1921.

Kluckholn, Clyde. "Myths and Rituals: A General Theory." *Harvard Theological Review* 35, no. 1 (1942): 45–79.

Kolakowski, Leszek. "A Kolakowski Anthology," *Humanities* 7, no. 2 (1986): 10–16.

Kolenda, Pauline. "Widowhood Among 'Untouchable' Chuhras." In Östör, Fruzzetti, and Barnett, 172–220.

Kraeling, Carl H., and Adams, Robert M., eds. *City Invincible: A Symposium on Urbanization and Cultural Development in the Ancient Near East*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.

Kramer, Samuel Noah. "The Biblical 'Song of Songs' and the Sumerian Love Songs." *Expedition: The Bulletin of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania* 5, no.1 (1962): 25–31.

_____. *The Sacred Marriage Rite*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964.

_____. *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement*. Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1944.

_____. "The Sumerian Sacred Marriage Texts." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 107, no.6 (1963): 485–527.

Krishna Sastri, H. *South Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses*. Madras: Madras Government Press, 1916.

Krishnaswami Aiyangar, C. F. *Ancient India and South Indian History*. Poona: n.p., 1941.

Lakoff, George, and Johnson, Mark. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Lambart, W. G. "Myth and Ritual as Conceived by the Babylonians." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 13, no. 1 (1968): 111–15.

Lanternari, Vittorio. *The Religions of the Oppressed—A Study of Messianic Cargo Cults*. Translated by Lisa Sergio. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963.

Leach, E. R. *Political Systems of Highland Burma*. London: Oxford University Press, 1954.

Lenormant, F. *The Beginnings of History According to the Bible and Traditions of Oriental Peoples*. Translated by Mary Lockwood from the 2nd French edition. New York: Scribners, 1882.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. Translated by Bell, Sturmer, and Needham. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969a.

_____. *The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to A Science of Mythology*. Translated by John and Noreen Weightman. New York: n.p., 1969b.

Lewis, Oscar. *Village Life in Northern India: Studies in a Delhi Village*. New York: Random House, 1958.

Loud, John, trans. *Sports of Śiva (Madurai)*. Madurai: Annai Velankanni Achagam, 1982.

MacCormac, Earl. *Metaphor and Myth in Science and Religion*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1976.

Madan, T. N. *Family and Kinship: A Study of the Pandits of Rural Kashmir*. New York: Asia Publishing House, 1965.

_____. "Structural Implications of Marriage in North India: Wife-Givers and Wife-Takers among the Pandits of Kashmir." *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, n.s. 9 (1975): 216–43.

_____. "The Ideology of the Householder Among the Kashmiri Pandits." In Östör, Fruzzetti, and Barnett, 99–118. 1982.

Maity, Pradyot Kumar. *Historical Studies in the Cult of the Goddess Manasā*. Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1966.

Manickavasagam, M. E. "Patterns of Early Tamil Marriages." *Tamil Culture* ll, no. 4 (October 1964): 329–39

Marglin, Frédérique Apffel. "Types of Sexual Union and Their Implicit Meanings." In Hawley and Wulff, 298–315. 1982.

____ . *Wives of the God-King: The Rituals of the Devadasis of Puri*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Marr, J. R. "The Eight Tamil Anthologies With Special Reference to Puṟanāṉūṟu and Patiṟṟupattu." Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1958

Marriott, McKim. "Hindu Transactions: Diversity without Dualism." In *Transaction and Meaning: Directions in the Anthropology of Exchange and Symbolic Behavior*, edited by Bruce Kapferer, 109–42. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976a.

____ . "Interpreting Indian Society: A Monistic Alternative to Dumont's Dualism." *Journal of Asian Studies* 36, no. 1 (November 1976b): 189–95.

____ and Inden, Ronald. "Caste Systems." In *Encyclopedia Brittanica*, Macropedia, vol. 3, 982–91, 1981 ed.

Martin, James L. "The Cycle of Festivals at Pārthasārathīswami Temple." In *Asian Religions: 1971*, edited by Bardwell Smith, 223–40. Chambersburg, Pa.: The American Academy of Religions, 1971.

____ . "Hindu Orthodoxy in a South Indian Village." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 35, no. 4 (December 1967): 362–71.

McAlpin, David W. "Linguistic Prehistory: The Dravidian Situation." In *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India*, edited by Madhav M. Deshpande and Peter Edwin Hook, 175–90. Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia, no.14, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1979.

McCutchen, Leighton. "The Father Figure in Psychology and Religion." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 40, no.2 (June 1972): 176–90.

McFague, Sallie. *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982.

May, Herbert. "The Fertility Cult in Hosea." *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 47, no. 2 (1932): 73–98.

McLaughlin, Eleanor, "'Christ my Mother': Feminine Naming and Metaphors in Medieval Spirituality," *St.Luke's Journal of Theology* 18, no. 4 (1975): 370–91.

Meek, Theophile James. "Canticles and the Tammuz Cult." *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 39, no. 1 (1922): 1–14.

____ . "Introduction to the Song of Songs." In *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 5. edited by George A. Buttrick, 91-96. 12 vols. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956.

Meena, V. *Madurai*. Cape Comorin: Harikumari Arts, n.d.

Meenakshisundaram, T. P. *A History of Tamil Literature*. Annamalainagar: Annamalai University, 1965.

Michel, Dom Virgil. *The Liturgy of the Church*. New York: Macmillan, 1937.

Mode, Heinz. *The Woman In Indian Art*. Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1972.

Moffat, Michael. "Harijan Religion: Consensus at the Bottom of Caste." *American Ethnologist* 6, no. 2 (1978): 244–60.

Monier-Williams, M. *Brahmanism and Hinduism*. London: Oxford University Press, 1891.

Moreno, Manuel. "God's Forceful Call: Possession as a Divine Strategy." In Waghorne, Cutler, and Narayanan, 103–22. 1985.

Moreno-Arcas, Manuel. "Virgin, Wife, and Widow: Complementary Performances and Perceptions in the Mariyamman Festival of a Tamil Town." Paper presented at the 13th Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, Wisconsin, 2 November 1984b.

_____ "Murugan, A God of Healing Poisons: The Physics of Worship in a South Indian Center for Pilgrimage." Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, June 1984a.

Morris, Katherine. "The 'Lascivious' Witch." *The Mankind Quarterly* 36, nos. 3, 4 (Spring/Summer 1986): 285–303.

Mowinckel, S. *He That Cometh*. Translated by G. W. Anderson. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956.

Murdoch, John. *Classified Catalogue of Tamil Printed Books*. 2nd ed. Tamil Development and Research Council. Madras: The Premier Art Press, 1968.

Nallaswami Piḷḷai, J. M., trans. *Saint Sekkilar's Periyapuranam*. Madras: n.p., 1925.

_____, trans. *Periyapuranam: Lives of the Saints by Saint Sekkilar*. Madras: Orient Longmans, 1955.

Nambiar, P. K. and Narayana Kurup, K. C., eds. *Census of India 1961*, vol. 9, pt. 7b, "Fairs and Festivals." Madras: Madras Government Press, 1968.

Narayana Ayyar, C. U. *Origin and Early History of Saivism in South India*. Madras: University of Madras, 1936.

Narayanan, Vasudha. "The Goddess Śrī: The Blossoming Lotus and Breast Jewel of Viṣṇu." In Hawley and Wulff, 224–37.

Natarajan, S. *Tamil and Sanskrit*. Tuticorin: Devi Press, 1975.

Nelson, James Henry. *The Madura Country: A Manual*. Madras: Asylum Press, 1869.

Newbigin, Leslie. *Unfinished Agenda: An Autobiography*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985.

Niebuhr, Richard H. *The Meaning of Revelation*. New York: Macmillan, 1962.

_____. *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1929.

Nilakanta Sastri, K. A. *Development of Religion in South India*. Madras: Orient Longmans, 1963.

_____. *A History of South India from Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar*. 3rd ed. Madras: Oxford University Press, 1966.

_____. *The Pāṇḍyan Kingdom from Earliest Times to the Sixteenth Century*. 2nd ed. Madras: Swathi Publications, 1972.

Ochs, Carol. *Behind the Sex of God: Toward a New Consciousness Transcending Matriarchy and Patriarchy*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1977.

Oesterley, W. O. E. "Early Hebrew Festival Rituals." In Hooke, 110–56. 1933.

O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger. *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Siva*. London: Oxford University Press, 1973.

_____. *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

_____. *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

_____. "The Shifting Balance of Power in the Marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī." In Hawley and Wulff, 129–43. 1982.

_____. *Dreams, Illusions, and Other Realities*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Opie, J. Lindsay. "Remember Taṭātagai." In Jeyechandran, 217–20.

Orenstein, Henry. *Gaon: Conflict and Cohesion in an Indian Village*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965.

Östör, Ákos; Fruzzetti, Lina; and Barnett, Steve, eds. *Concepts of Person: Kinship, Caste, and Marriage in India*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Pal, D. N. *Siva and Sakti: An Elaborate Discourse on Hindu Religion and Mythology*. 2 vols. Calcutta: n.p., 1910.

Pallis, Svend. *The Antiquity of Iraq: A Handbook for Assyriology*. Copenhagen: Enjar Munksgaard, 1956.

_____. *The Babylonian Akitu Festival*. Copenhagen: Bianco Lunos Bogtrykkeri, 1926.

Pandey, Raj Bali. *Hindu Saṃskāras: A Socio-Religious Study of the Hindu Sacraments.* Banaras: Vikrama Publications, 1949 and Varnasi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1969.

Penner, Hans. "Myth and Ritual: An Essay on Method with Particular Focus on the Vishnu Purana." Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1965.

____ . "Myth and Ritual: A Wasteland or a Forest of Symbols?" *History and Theory* Beiheft 8 (1968): 46-57.

____ . "The Poverty of Functionalism." *History of Religions*, 11, no.1 (August 1971): 91-97.

Pfaffenberger, Bryan. *Caste in Tamil Culture: The Religious Foundations of Sudra Domination in Tamil Sri Lanka.* Foreign and Comparative Studies, South Asian Series no. 7, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. Syracuse: Syracuse University, 1982.

Pillay, K. K. *The Sucindram Temple.* Madras: Kalakshetra Publications, 1953.

____ . "The Madurai Pandyas." In Jeyechandran, 153-160.

Poncé, Charles. *Kabbalah: An Introduction and Illumination for the World Today.* Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing House, 1980.

Pope, Marvin H. *Song of Songs: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary.* Anchor Bible Series. New York: Doubleday, 1977.

Radhakrishnan, K. N., ed. *Thirumalirunjolaimalai.* Madurai: Sri Kallalagar Devastanam, 1942.

Radhakrishnan, N. *The Administrative Report of Sri Kallalagar Devastanam.* Madurai: Sri Kallalagar Devastanam, 1937.

Rajagopalan, T. R. *Welcome to Madurai.* Madurai: Sri Karthikeiya Publications, n.d.

Ramabai, Saraswati. *The High-Caste Hindu Woman.* Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1901.

Ramachandra Dikshitar, V. R. *Studies in Tamil Literature and History.* Madras: n.p., 1936.

Ramanujan, A. K., trans. *Speaking of Siva.* Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972.

____ , trans. *Hymns for the Drowning: Poems for Viṣṇu by Nammāḷvār.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Ramaswami, M. S. *History and Influence of Jains in South India.* N.p., n.d.

Ramdas, G. "Marriage Customs in South India." *Man in India* 8 (1928): 136-45.

Reiniche, Marie-Louise. *Les Dieux et les hommes: Études des cultes d'un village du Tirunelveli, Inde du Sud.* Paris: Mouton, 1979.

Renou, Louis. *Religions of Ancient India.* New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

Reynolds, Holly Baker. "The Auspicious Married Woman." In Wadley, 35-60. 1980.

____ . "'To Keep the Tali Strong': Women's Rituals in Tamilnad, India." Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1978.

Richards, J. F., ed. *Kingship and Authority in South Asia.* South Asian Studies Publication no.3. Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1978.

Ricoeur, Paul. *The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language.* Translated by Robert Czerny. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977.

Ringgren, H. "Hohes Lied und Hieros Gamos." *Zeitschrift für die Altestamentliche Wissenschaft* 65, nos.3, 4 (1953): 300-302.

Robertson Smith, W. *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions,* edited by Stanley A. Cook. 3rd ed. London: A. C. Black, 1927.

Robinson, T. "Hebrew Myths." In Hooke, 181-91. 1933.

Roof, Wade, and Roof, Jenifer L. "Review of the Polls: Images of God among Americans." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 23, no. 2 (June 1984): 201-6.

Sacks, Sheldon, ed. *On Metaphor.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

Sandmel, Samuel. *The Hebrew Scriptures*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963.

Sapir, J. David, and Crocker, J. Christopher, eds. *The Social Use of Metaphor: Essays on the Anthropology of Rhetoric*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977.

Satyanatha Aiyer, R. *History of the Nayaks of Madura*. Madras: University of Madras, 1924.

Schmökel, Hartmut. *Das Land Sumer: Die Wiederentdeckung der ersten Hochkultur der Menscheit*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1955.

Schneider, David M. *American Kinship: A Cultural Account*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968.

Scholem, G. *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*. New York: Schoken, 1965.

Schomerus, H. W., trans. *Sivaitische Heilegenlegenden (Periyapurāṇa und Tiruvātavūrarpurāṇa)*. Eugen: Eugen Diederichs, 1925.

Schwartzberg, Joseph E., ed. *A Historical Atlas of South Asia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Sergent, Bernard. "Three Notes on the Trifunctional Indo-European Marriage." *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 12, nos. 1, 2 (Spring 1984): 179–91.

Shenoy, J. P. Lasrado. *Madurai—The Temple City*. Madras: C. M. V. Press, 1937.

Shulman, David Dean. "The Murderous Bride: Tamil Versions of the Myth of Devī and the Buffalo Demon." *History of Religions* 16, no. 2 (November 1976): 120–47.

_____ . "The Mythology of the Tamiḻ Saiva Talapurāṇam" Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1976.

_____ . *Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Saiva Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Siegel, Lee. *Fires of Love/Waters of Peace: Passion and Renunciation in Indian Culture*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983.

Singer, Milton, ed. *Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.

_____ . *When a Great Tradition Modernizes: An Anthropological Approach to Indian Civilization*. Foreword by M. N. Srinivas. New York: Praeger Publications, 1972.

Sivaraja Piḷḷai, K. N. *Agastya in the Tamil Land*. Madras: University of Madras, n.d.

_____ . *The Chronology of the Early Tamils: Based on the Synchronistic Tables of Their Kings, Chieftans, and Poets Appearing in the Sangam Literature*. Mylapore: Madras Law Journal Press, 1932.

Sivaramamurti, C. *Kalugamalai and Early Pandyan Rock-Cut Shrines*. Bombay: N. M. Tripathi, 1961.

Slater, Gilbert. *Southern India*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1936.

Smith, Jonathan Z. "Hieros Gamos." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Micropedia, vol. 5. 15th ed., 1978, 33.

Smith, Julian. "Madurai, India: The Architecture of a City." M.A. thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1976.

Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. *Questions of Religious Truth*. New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1967.

Somasundaram, J. M. "Alakar Koil, an Ancient Shrine." *Tamil Culture* 9, no.1 (January-March 1961): 406–11.

Somasundaram Piḷḷai, J. M. *The Great Temple at Tanjore*. Madras: Golden, 1935.

Soskice, Janet. *Metaphor and Religious Language*. London: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Soundara Rajan, K. V. "The Kaleidoscopic Activities of Mediaeval Temples in Tamilnadu." *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society* 42, no. 3 (1952): 87–101.

_____ . "Archaeology of Pandyanadu." In Jeyechandran, 161–64. 1974.

Spencer, George W. "Religious Networks and Royal Influence in Eleventh-Century

South India." *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 12, no.1 (January 1969): 38–59.
Spratt, Philip. *Hindu Culture and Personality: A Psychoanalytic Study*. Bombay: n.p., 1966.
Srinivas, M. N. *Marriage and Family in Mysore*. Bombay: New Book Co., 1942.
____ . *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952.
Srinivasa Iyengar, P. T. *History of the Tamils from Earliest Times to 600 A.D.* Madras: n.p., 1929.
Staal, Frits. "The Meaninglessness of Ritual." *Numen* 26, fasc.1 (1979): 2–22.
Stanner, W. E. H. *On Aboriginal Religion*. Oceania Monographs, no. 11. Sydney: n.p., 1963.
Stein, Burton. "Brahman and Peasant in Early South Indian History." *Adyar Library Bulletin* 31–32 (1967–68): 228–69.
____ . "The State, the Temple, and Agricultural Development: A Study in Medieval South India." *The Economic Weekly Annual*, 4 February 1961, 179–88.
Stern, Theodore. "Some Sources of Variability in Klamath Mythology." *Journal of American Folklore* 69 (1956): 6–384.
Stevenson, Mrs. Sinclair. *The Rites of the Twice-Born*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1920.
Stutley, Margaret and James. *Harper's Dictionary of Hinduism*. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.
Subrahmanian, N. *Saṅgam Polity: The Administration and Social Life of the Saṅgam Tamils*. Madras: Asia Publishing House, 1966.
____ . "The Sports of Siva and the Lady of the City." In Jeyechandran, 214–17. 1974.
Subramaniam, T. N. *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*. 3 vols. Madras: Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, 1955.
Sur, A. K. *Sex and Marriage in India*. Bangalore: Allied Publishers, 1973.
Tambiah, S. J. *Buddhism and Spirit Cults in Northeast Thailand*. Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
Taylor, William, comm., ed., and trans. *Oriental Historical Manuscripts in the Tamil Language, Chiefly Bearing upon the History of the Kingdom of Madura*. 2 vols. Madras: n.p., 1835.
Thomas, Lowell. *India: Land of the Black Pagoda*. New York: P. F. Collier and Sons, 1930.
Thurston, Edgar. *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India*. Madras: Government Press, 1906.
Toffin, Gérard. "Culte des déesses et fête du Dasai chez les Néwar (Népal)." In Biardeau, 55–82.
Tracy, David. "Metaphor and Religion: The Test Case of Christian Texts." In Sacks, 89–104.
Trautmann, Thomas R., ed. *Kinship and History in South Asia*. Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia, no.7. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1974.
____ . *Dravidian Kinship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
Tripathi, Kisori Sarana. *A Cultural Study of the Śrīmād Bhāgavata*. Varanasi: Benaras Hindu University, 1969.
Trivedi, R. G. *Iconography of Pārvatī*. Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1981.
Troeltsch, Ernst. *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*. Translated by Olive Wyan. New York: Macmillan, 1949.
Vail, Lise F. "Founders, Swamis, and Devotees: Becoming Divine in North Karnataka." In Waghorne, Cutler, and Narayanan, 123–42.
van Buitenen, J. A. B., ed. and trans. *The Mahābhārata*. Vol. 1, The Book of the Beginning. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973.

_____ . "A Brief History of the Languages of India." In Dimock et al., 6–14. 1978a.

_____ . "Written Texts and Their Preservation." In Dimock et al., 34–35. 1978b.

Van Buren, Elizabeth Douglas. "The Sacred Marriage in Early Times in Mesopotamia." *Orientalia*, n.s. 13 (1944): 1–72.

Vatuk, Sylvia. "Forms of Address in the North Indian Family: An Exploration of the Cultural Meaning of Kin Terms." In Östör, Fruzzetti, and Barnett, 56–99.

Vergote, A., and Tamayo, A. *The Parental Figures and the Representation of God: A Psychological and Cross-Cultural Study*. The Hague: Mouton, 1980.

Vinson, Julién. *Légendes bouddhiques et djainas, traduites du Tamoul*. 2 vols. Paris: J. Maisonneuve, 1900.

Viswanathan E. Sa. "The Madurai Tamil Sangam." In Jeyechandran, 184–87.

von Harnack, Adolf. *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*. Translated by James Moffat. New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1904.

Wadley, Susan S., ed. *The Powers of Tamil Women*. Foreign and Comparative Studies, South Asian Series no. 6, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. Syracuse: Syracuse University, 1980.

_____ . "The Paradoxical Powers of Tamil Women." In Wadley, 153–67.

Waghorne, Joanne Punzo; Cutler, Norman; and Narayanan, Vasudha, eds. *Gods of Flesh/Gods of Stone: The Embodiment of Divinity in India*. Chambersburg, Pa.: Anima Press, 1985.

Weber, Max. *The Sociology of Religion*. Translated by E. Fischoff. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.

Welbon, Guy R., and Yocum, Glenn E., eds. *Religious Festivals in South India and Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1982.

Wheatley, Ira Mitchell. "The Hieros Gamos in the Ancient Near East and in Israel." Ph.D. diss., Univeristy of Iowa, 1966.

Wheatley, Paul. *The Pivot of the Four Quarters*. Chicago: Aldine Publishers, 1971.

Whitehead, Henry. *The Village Gods of South India*. Madras: Oxford University Press, 1921.

Widengren, George. "Hieros Gamos." *Religion Och Bibel* 7 (1948): 17–46.

Wilbur, Theodore. *Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism*. Hamilton, N. Y.: by the author, 1915.

Wilcox, Linda. "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven." *Sunstone* 5, no. 5 (1980): 9–15.

Winternitz, M. *A History of Indian Literature*. Translated by S.Ketakar. Vol. 1, pt.1, Calcutta, 1927, 2nd ed. 1962; vol. 2, pt. 2, Calcutta, 1963; vol. 3, pt.1, translated by H. Kohn, Calcutta, 1959; vol. 3, pt.2, translated by S. Jha, Calcutta, 1967.

Wu, Nelson. *Chinese and Indian Architecture: The City of Man, the Mountain of God, and the Realm of the Immortals*. New York: George Braziller, 1963.

Wulff, Donna Marie. "A Sanskrit Portrait: Rādhā in the Plays of Rūpa Gosvāmī." In Hawley and Wulff, 27–41.

Yalman, Nur. *Under the Bo Tree: Studies in Caste, Kinship, and Marriage in the Interior of Ceylon*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.

Yocum, Glenn E. "A Study of Māṇikkavācakar's Tiruvācakam: The Setting and Significance of a Devotional Text." Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1976.

_____ . *Hymns to a Dancing Siva: A Study of Māṇikkavācakkar's Tiruvācakam*. Columbia, Mo.: South Asia Books, 1982.

_____ . "The Goddess in a Tamil Śaiva Devotional Text, Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam*." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 45, no. 1 (Supplement, March 1977): 369–88.

Younger, Paul. "The Family of Śiva in a South Indian Grove," *Sciences Religieuses/Studies in Religion* 11, no. 3 (Summer, 1982): 245–63.

____. "Popular Religion and Politics in South India: The Annual Visit of the Goddess Māriyamman̲ to Śrīraṅkam," *Religion and Society* 30, no. 1 (March 1983): 18–27.

Zaehner, Robin C., ed. and trans. *Hindu Scriptures*. New York: Patton, 1966.

Ziegenbalg, Bartholomaeus. *Genealogy of the South-Indian Gods*. Translated by G. Metzger. Madras: Higginbothams, 1869.

Zvelebil, Kamil Veith. *The Smile of Murugan: On Tamil Literature of South India*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973.

____. *Tamil Literature*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974.

____. *Tamil Literature*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975.

Tamil Works, by Author

Akilan̲. "Kaṅkā Sn̲ān̲am." In *A Tamil Prose Reader*, edited by R. E. Asher and R. Radhakrishnan, 61–70. London: Cambridge University Press, 1971.

Ayōtitās, C. *Ten̲n̲intiya Pauttarkaḷ Vivāka Viḷakkam*. Iraṅkūn̲, Burma: Je. Araṅkanātam Accukkūṭam, 1922.

Cāmpacivan̲, C. *Mānakar Maturai*. 2nd ed. Maturai: Mīn̲āṭci Puttakaḷ Nilayam, 1963.

Cantān̲am, Kuḷittalai Kō. *Camayapuram Māriyamman̲ Stala Varalāṟu: Aṣṭakamum Pōṟṟit Tiruvakavalum*. Samayapuram: Paṭakkaṭai, n.d.

Cantiracēkara Paṭṭar, Ca. "Maturait Tiruviḷākkaḷ." In Jeyechandran, 107–12.

Cāṣtirikaḷ, Nārāyaṇa Nīlakaṇṭa. *Shrī Mīn̲ākṣi Kōyil Stala Varalāṟu*. Maturai: Shrī Mīn̲ākṣi Jotisa Kalā Mantiram, 1973.

Catāciva Paṇṭārattār, T. V. *Pāṇṭiyar Varalāṟu*. Cen̲n̲ai: Caivacittānta Nūṟpatippuk Kaḻakam, 1966.

Centil Turavi [pseud.]. *Aimperu Viḻākkaḷ*. Cen̲n̲ai: Cāṣtā Patippakam, 1970.

Irācamāṇikkam Piḷḷai, Mā. *Tamiḻar Tirumaṇa Nūl*. Cen̲n̲ai: Tamiḻar Nalvāḻkkaik Kaḻakattār, 1939.

Irāmacāmip Pulavar, Ca. A. *Kanta Purāṇam Vacan̲am*. Tirunelvēli: Caivacittānta Nūṟpatippuk Kaḻakam, 1966.

Jeyechandran, A. V., ed. *Maturait Tirukkōyil: Tirukkuṭa Nan̲n̲īrāṭṭup Peruviḻā Malar*. Preface by Mu. Varatarācan̲ār. Maturai: Aruḷmiku Mīn̲āṭci Cuntarēcuvarar Tirukkōyil, 1974.

Kantacāmi, V. *Tamiḻnāṭṭin̲ Tala Varalāṟukaḷum Paṇpāṭṭuc Cin̲n̲aṅkaḷum*. Cen̲n̲ai: Paḻan̲iyappā Pirantars, 1983

Kiruṣṇacāmi, Vē. *Tamiḻil Talapurāṇa Ilakkiyam*. Muttucāmipuram: A. Vēlukkōn̲ār, 1974.

Kiruṣṇamūrtti Ayyar, K. R. *Tiruvaruḷ Payakkum Teyvat Tirumaṇaṅkaḷ*. Cen̲n̲ai: Meṭrōpāliṭan̲ Piriṇṭars, 1972.

Kōpālacāmi Nāyakkar, Ar. "Tirumalai Man̲n̲an̲ai Nin̲aivu Koḷvōm." In Jeyechandran, 17–21.

Kovintacāmi Aiyar, Mu. *Tirumalai Nāyakkar Carittiram*. Maturai: Kōpāla Kiruṣṇak Kōn̲, 1922.

Lakṣimīnarasimmācāriyar, O. P. *Vivāham*. Cen̲n̲ai: published privately by Nā. Mun̲icāmi Mutaliyār, 1945.

Murukarattin̲am, Ti. "Maturai Mūtūr Mānakar." In Jeyechandran, 99–103.

Murukēcan̲, Ma. A. "Maturai An̲ṟum In̲ṟum." In Jeyechandran, 6–10.

Mutaliyār, Aruṇācala. *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam Vacan̲akāviyam*. Cen̲n̲ai: Tirumakaḷ Accakam, 1971.

Muttukōṉar, Es. "Varalāṟṟu Ēṭukaḷilē Maturaik Kōyil." In Jeyechandran, 274–80.
Nallāṉ, Tirumalai. *Mārkaḻi Nōṉpu Allatu Shrī Āṇṭāḷ Tirumaṇam*. Ceṉṉai: Aravintā Piriṇṭars, 1968.
Naṭarājaṉ, Es. *Tamiḻar Paṇṭikaikaḷum Paṇpāṭum*. Ceṉṉai: Vaṉati Patipakkam, 1972.
Naṭarājaṉ, Tēva. "Maturai Varalāṟu." In Jeyechandran, 379–82.
Nārāyaṇan Cettiyār, Le. "Tirumuḷkkup Peruviḻā." In Jeyechandran, 10–13
Pālacuntara Nāyakkar, A. Ku. *Tamiḻar Tirumaṇa Muṟai: Caivam*. Ceṉṉai: Cātu Accukkūṭam, 1941.
Pālacuntara Nāyakar, A. Ku. *Tamiḻar Tirumaṇa Muṟai: Vaiṇavam*. Ceṉṉai: Cātu Accukkūṭam, 1941.
Paḻaniyappaṉ, Ki. *Kōyil Māṉakar: Maturai Mīṉāṭci Cuntarar Tirukkōyil Varalāṟu*. Maturai: Tiruppaṇikkuḻu Mīṉāṭci Tirukkōyil, 1963.
Pañcanatam Piḷḷai, R. *Srī Mīṉāṭci Cuntarēcuvarar Kōyil Varalāṟu*. 2nd ed. Maturai: Maturai Srī Mīṉāṭci Cuntarēcuvarar Ālaya Veḷiyīṭu, 1970.
_____. *Tiruviḷākkaḷin Uṇmaiviḷakkam*. 2nd ed. Maturai: Maturai Srī Mīṉākshi Cuntarēṣvarar Tēvastāṉam, 1962.
Paramacivāṉantam, A. Mu. *Tamiḻnāṭṭu Viḻākkaḷ*. Ceṉṉai: n.p., 1960
Parantāmaṉār, A. Ki. "Maturai Nāyakkarkaḷum Kōyil Tiruppaṇikaḷum." In Jeyechandran, 137–44.
Parantāmaṉār, A. Ki. "Tirumalai Nāyakkar Tiruppaṇikaḷ: 1623-1659." In *Maturai Shrī Mīṉāṭci Cuntarēcuvarar Mahakumpapishēkam*. Maturai: Shrī Mīṉāṭci Tēvastanam, 1963.
Perumāl, Va. "Maturaiyiṉ Māṇpu." In Jeyechandran, 99–103.
Pulavar Aracu (pseud.). *Tiruviḷaiyāṭal Vacaṉam*. Madras: Tirunelvēli Caivacittānta Publications, 1972.
Rājahaṃsā. *Mīṉampākkam Mīṉāṭci Mutaliya Siṟu Nāṭakaṅkaḷ*. Haṃsā Pracurālayam: Uraiyur, Madras, 1944.
Tiruñāṉacampanta Mutaliyār, Vī. *Tirumaṇa Nūl*. Kāñcipuram: Patmā Accukūṭam, 1947.
Vēṇukōpāl, Caraṣvati. "Maturai—Vāymoḻi Ilakkiyattil." In Jeyechandran, 127–31.
Vīrācāmi. Ta. Vē. "Maturaic Caṅkap Pulavarkaḷ." In Jeyechandran, 251–55.

Tamil Works, by Title

Akanaṉūṟu. Edited by U. Vē. Rā. Rākvaiyaṅkār Ṣvāmikaḷ. Madras: R. G. Press, 1933.
Caivapūṣaṇam of Śrī Pancakkara Yōki. Tēvakōṭṭai: n.p., 1925.
Cēkkiḻār Nāyaṉār Purāṇam of Umapaticivācāriyar. Ceṉṉai: Vittiyātu Pālaṉa Yantracālai, 1926.
Cilappatikāram Arum Patavurai of Arumpatavuraiyāciriyar. 2nd ed. Ceṉṉai: Kamarṣil Accukkūṭam, 1920.
Cilappatikāram of Iḷaṅkōvaṭikaḷ. Edited, with commentary, by Po. Vē. Cōmacuntaraṉār. Ceṉṉai: Teṉṉintiya Caivacittānta Kaḻakam, 1973.
Cuntarapāṇṭiyam of Aṉatāri. Edited by T. Chandrasekharan. Madras: Madras Government Oriental Manuscripts Series, no. 41, 1955.
Irāmāvatāram of Kampaṉ. Commentary by Kopālakiruṣṇamācāryar. 5th ed. Madras: n.p., 1953–55.
Iṟaiyaṉārakap Poruḷ. Commentary by Kaṇakkāyaṉār Makaṉār Nakkīraṉār. Madras: V. N. Jubilee Press, 1898.
Kalaikkaḷañciyam. 10 vols. Ceṉṉai: Tamiḻ Vaḷarccik Kaḻaka Veliyīṭu, 1961.
Kalittokai. Commentary by Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar. Ceṉṉai: Teṉṉintiya Caivacittānta Kaḻakam, 1938.

Kallāṭam Mayilyērum of Kallāṭaṉār. Ceṉṉai: Cantira Mauli Press, 1932.
Kantapurāṇam of Kacciyappacivācāriyar. Commentary by Ma. Ti. Pāṉukavi. Madras: n.p., 1907.
Kaṭampavaṉa Purāṇam of Vīmanāta Paṇṭitar. Ceṉṉai: Vittiyārvarttiṉi Accukkūṭam, 1879.
Makāpāratam of Villiputtūrāḻvār. Edited by Citamparam Naṭarājapiḷḷai. Madras: n.p., 1914.
Maturai Aṅkayaṟkaṇṇammai, allatu Mīṉākṣiyammai Piḷḷaitamiḻ. Kumarakurupara Tampirāṉ. Edited by Caravaṇa Perumāḷ Ayyar and revised by K. V. Āṟumaka Mutaliyār. N.p., 1860.
Maturai Mīṉāṭciyammaṉ Tiruvaruḷpeṟṟa Poṉṉaḷaka Reṉṉum Kaḷḷaḻakar Ammāṉai. No author. Ceṉṉai: Ār. Ji. Pati Kampeṉi, 1974.
Maturaic Cokkanātarulā of Purāṇattirumalainātar. Notes and commentary by Vē. Cāminātaiyar. Ceṉṉai: Kēsari Accukkūṭam, 1931.
Mīṉāṭciyammai Piḷḷait Tamiḻ of Kumarakuruparacuvāmikaḷ. 2nd ed. Ceṉṉai: Kalāratnākara Accuk Kūṭam, 1902.
Pāṇṭiyar Ceppēṭukaḷ Pattu. Ceṉṉai: Tamiḻ Varalāṟṟuk Kaḻakam, 1967.
Periyapurāṇam allatu Tiruttoṇṭarpurāṇam of Cēkkiḻār. Commentary by C. K. Cuppiramaṇiya Mutaliyār. 2nd ed. 12 vols. Kōyamuttūr: Kōvair Tamiḻ Caṅkam, 1960.
Śrī Tēvi Pākavatam of Vētaviyāsa Pakavāṉ. Edited by Ti. Es. Kiruṣṇa Aiyar. Tirunelvēli: Śrī Kōmaḷavalli Ammaṉ Kōvil, 1953.
Tēvaram. Tirumuṟai 1, 2, and 3 of Tiruñāṉacampantamūrtti; 4, 5, and 6 of Tirunāvukkaraccuvāmi; 7 of Cuntaramūrtti. Ceṉṉai: Caivavittiyatupalaṉayantiracālai, 1911.
Tiṉa Tanti (Madurai edition) 20 April 1970. "Cittirai Tiruviḻā Muṭintatu," p. 1.
Tirumaṇaviṉai Viḷakkam. Tirunelvēli: Teṉṉintiya Caivacittānta Kaḻakam, 1928.
Tiruvācagam or "Sacred Utterances" of the Tamil Poet, Saint, and Sage Māṇikka-Vācagar. Edited and translated by G. U. Pope. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900.
Tiruvācakam of Māṇikkavācakar. Edited, with commentary, by Cuvāmi Citpavāṉantar. Tirupparāytuṟai: Srīramakiruṣṇa Tapōvaṉam, 1970.
Tiruvālavāyuṭaiyar Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam of Cellinakar Perumpaṟṟap Puliyūr Nampi. Edited, with commentary, by U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar. Ceṉṉai: Rippaṉ Acciyantiraccālai, 1906.
Tiruvātavūraṭikaḷ Purāṇam of Kaṭavuḷmāmuṉivar. Edited, with commentary, by Pu. Ci. Puṉṉaivānanta Mutaliyār. Ceṉṉai: Teṉṉintiya Caiva Cittānta Kaḻakam, 1967.
Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam: Kataic Curukkam. Madras: Lipkō Publishers, 1971.
Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam of Parañcōtimuṉivar. Commentary by Na. Mu. Vēṅkaṭacāmi Nāṭṭār. 3 vols. Ceṉṉai: Teṉṉintiya Caiva Cittāṇta Nūrpatippu Kaḻakam, 1927. Reissued 1965.
Tolkāppiyap Poruḷatikāram. Nacciṉārkkiniyar and Pēraciriyar (commentary). Madras: Minerva Press, 1916.

Sanskrit Works, by Title

Agni Purāṇa. Translated by M. N. Dutt. Calcutta: n.p., 1903.
Bhagavad Gītā. Translated, with commentary, by Robin C. Zaehner. London: Oxford University Press, 1969; paperback ed., 1973.
Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Translated by J. M. Sanyal. Calcutta: n.p., 1930–34.
Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa. Translated by Rajendra Nath Sen. In *Sacred Books of the Hindus.* Vol. 24, pts.1, 2. Allahabad: 1919 and New York: 1973.

Bṛhad-Araṇyaka Upaniṣad. Translated by Śriśa Chandra Vasu. In *Sacred Books of the Hindus*. Vol. 14. Allahabad: 1918 and New York: 1974.
Devī Māhātmyam. (Glory of the Divine Mother). Translated by S. Shankaranarayan. Pondicherry: Dipti Publications, 1968.
Devībhāgavata Purāṇa. Translated by Swami Vijñānanda. In *Sacred Books of the Hindus*. Vol. 26. Allahabad: n.p., 1921–23.
Hālāsyamāhātmya. Edited, with commentary, by Vicvanātha Cāstrin. Cennapuri: n.p., 1910 (in Grantha script).
Harivaṃśa. Translated by Manmatha Nāth. Calcutta: H. C. Dass, 1897.
Kūrma Purāṇa. Translated by A. S. Gupta. Banaras: Kashiraj Trust, 1972.
Lalitamādhava-nāṭaka. Edited by Bābūlāl Śukla. Varanasi: Chokhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1969.
Liṅga Purāṇa. In *Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology*. Edited by J. L. Shastri. Vols. 5, 6. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973.
Mahābhārata. 11 vols. 2nd ed. Translated by Pratap Chandra Roy. Calcutta: n.p., 1927–32
Mahābhārata. 3 vols. Translated, with introduction, by J. A. B. van Buitenen. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972–78
Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa. Translated by Frederick Eden Pargiter. 2 vols. Calcutta: Bibliotecha Indica, 1904.
Matsya Purāṇa. Translated by S. Vidyārṇava. In *Sacred Books of the Hindus*. Vol. 17. Allahabad: n.p., 1916.
Padma Purāṇa. Edited by Viśvanātha Nārāyaṇa Maṇḍalika. Poona: Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series, 1893–94.
Śiva Purāṇa. In *Ancient Indian Traditions and Mythology*. Edited by J. L. Shastri. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970.
Śrī Mad Dēvi Bhāgavatam. Translated by B. D. Basu. In *Sacred Books of the Hindus*. Vol 26. Allahabad: n.p., 1923.
Śrimad Bhāgavata Purāṇam. Translated by S. Subra Rau. Tirupati: n.p., 1928.
Tattirīya Brāhmana of the Black Yajur Veda. Commentary by Sāyaṇa. Calcutta: Bibliographica Indica, 1859.
Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra. Translated by W. Caland. Calcutta: n.p., 1891.
Vāmana Purāṇa. Edited and translated by Anand Swarup Gupta. Varanasi: All India Kashiraj Trust, 1968.
Vishnu Purāṇam. Edited and translated by Manmatha Nath Dutt. Calcutta: n.p., 1896.
Viṣṇu Purāṇa. Translated by Horace Hayman Wilson. Edited by F. Hall. London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1877.
Vṛhad Jīvana Caritra. N.p., 1951–52. Consulted in the Special Collections Section of Regenstein Library of the University of Chicago.

INDEX

WILLIAM P. HARMAN is Associate Professor at De Pauw University and teaches philosophy and religion. He has published articles in, among other periodicals, *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Mankind Quarterly*, and *The Journal of the Institute of Asian Studies*.

Excerpts from reviews:

"This is an exceptionally fine piece of work,...first-rate, original ...beautifully crafted and written. The translations of the Tamil text are elegant and clear, and the descriptions of the ritual lively and complete."

WENDY DONIGER O'FLAHERTY
Mircea Eliade Professor of
the History of Religions,
University of Chicago

"...excellent ...accessible and intelligible to a wide audience. Harman takes the "metaphor" of sacred marriage seriously and maps out its range...This is a perceptive and meticulously documented study."

DAVID SHULMAN
Hebrew University

MOTILAL BANARSIDASS PUBLISHERS PVT. LTD.